

# Rolling Stone

Issue 1079  
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## Green Day Fights On

### EMINEM'S CONFESSION

Addiction, Recovery and 'Relapse'

### SUMMER CONCERT GUIDE

Best Festivals  
Biggest Tours  
Cheap Tickets

THE REPUBLICAN  
MELTDOWN

BY TIM DICKINSON



# RS1079

"All the News That Fits"

## BUBBLELICIOUS

Gaga on May 2nd at New York's Terminal 5, where she sold out two shows.



## Lady Gaga's No-Pants Party

Dance queen Lady Gaga is known for her wacky, pants-free fashion sense. But at a sold-out gig in New York, Gaga took the sartorial madness up a notch with her bubble dress. The night's biggest thrill? Madonna, her daughter, Lourdes, and Cyndi Lauper dropped by. "I could feel Lourdes' energy from the rafters," says Gaga, who busted out hits including "Just Dance" and "Poker Face." "Afterward, Madonna had a message relayed to me that Lourdes had the time of her life."

## COVER STORY

### Green Day's Bid for Rock Immortality

The scrappy punks, who became superstars 15 years ago with *Dookie*, are now America's most ambitious rock band. At home in Oakland with the tightknit trio on the eve of releasing their epic punk opera *21st Century Breakdown*.

By David Fricke ..... 46

## NATIONAL AFFAIRS

### The GOP Jihad

No leaders. No ideas. No clue. Post-Bush, the Republican Party is purging its sensible middle and letting Rush Limbaugh take the wheel.

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### Cornel West, Blues Philosopher

The pre-eminent intellectual of our generation has gone from the Black Panthers to the Ivy League. Now he's determined to be Barack Obama's conscience.

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### Steve Earle and the Ghost of Townes

The country rocker almost died emulating his damaged mentor, Townes Van Zandt. On a new tribute album, Earle looks back.

By Joe Hagan ..... 62

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### American Idol's Glamboyant Savior

How Adam Lambert – a flamboyant glam rocker with a sex-god persona – single-handedly saved *Idol*.

By Rob Sheffield ..... 38

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From U2 and No Doubt to Phish and Kings of Leon, the lowdown on 57 of summer's hottest tours. **PLUS:** How to find the cheapest tickets, and the ins and outs of seven festivals that are worth the road trip ..... 23



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On his first album since 2004, Eminem beats down his biggest target: himself.....67

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### Hell-Raising Hooley

Back in *Da Vinci* mode, Tom Hanks reignites the battle between *Angels & Demons* ..... 76



### On the Cover

Green Day (Tré Cool, Billie Joe Armstrong and Mike Dirnt, from left), photographed in Oakland, April 27th, 2009.

Photograph by Sam Jones

Styling by Becks Welch at the Wall Group. Makeup by Nellie Kim for Shu Uemura at Margaret Maldonado Agency. Hair by Duke Snyder for Bumble and Bumble. Cool's shirt by John Varvatos, pants and tie vintage Ralph Lauren. Armstrong's pants and scarf by John Varvatos. Dirnt's pants by Diesel, shirt by Agave.

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### Green Day: All-Access

Exclusive video and photos from the trio's RS cover shoot, reviews of their secret gigs in Oakland and New York, and more from David Fricke's interviews with Billie Joe, Mike and Tré. **PLUS:** A photo gallery retracing the superstar band's rise from bratty Bay Area punks to rock icons. [rollingstone.com/issue1079](http://rollingstone.com/issue1079)

## ON THE SCENE

### Chickenfoot Live

A report from the Seattle debut gig of the new super-group featuring Van Halen vets Sammy Hagar and Michael Anthony, guitar god Joe Satriani and Chili Pepper Chad Smith. [rollingstone.com/rockdaily](http://rollingstone.com/rockdaily)

## LISTEN

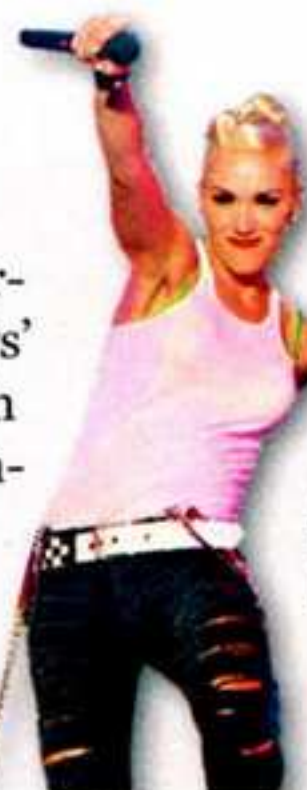
### Revisiting 'Paul's Boutique'

Mark the 20th anniversary of the Beastie Boys' groundbreaking album with a free audio download of Continuum books' latest *33 1/3* title. [rollingstone.com/issue1079](http://rollingstone.com/issue1079)

## PHOTOS

### No Doubt's Comeback

Gwen Stefani (left) and Co. recently hit Atlantic City for their first show in five years. Check out live pics from the gig. [rollingstone.com/issue1079](http://rollingstone.com/issue1079)



## ONLINE EXCLUSIVES

### Summer Tours: RS's One-Stop Guide

From AC/DC to U2, what you need to know – dates, ticket info, key tracks – about the season's 20 biggest tours. **PLUS:** Live-photo galleries. [rollingstone.com/issue1079](http://rollingstone.com/issue1079)

### Crowning a New American Idol

This year's *Idol* finalists are the strongest batch yet. Follow our resident *Idol* expert Rob Sheffield's live blog of the show's May 20th finale, and revisit the season's highs and lows in our photo gallery. [rollingstone.com/americanidol](http://rollingstone.com/americanidol)

## VIDEO

### Patrick Stump Solo

Fall Out Boy's singer enters our studio for a solo acoustic performance of FOB favorites "America's Suitehearts" and "What a Catch, Donnie" – as well as a cover of Prince's "I Wanna Be Your Lover." [rollingstone.com/rockdaily](http://rollingstone.com/rockdaily)

### Katy Perry Interview

The breakout hitmaker talks to RS about following up her 2008 debut album, *One of the Boys*, her unconventional religious upbringing – and her ex-hippie mom's friendship with Jimi Hendrix. [rollingstone.com/rockdaily](http://rollingstone.com/rockdaily)

## BLOGS

### Rock on the Range

On May 16th, Slipknot, Mötley Crüe, Alice in Chains and 35 other hard-rock heavy hitters descend on Columbus, Ohio, for this two-day festival. Video, photos and reports from the Rust Belt's rowdiest party. [rollingstone.com/issue1079](http://rollingstone.com/issue1079)

### Of Montreal Live

Kevin Barnes and his experimental Athens, Georgia, band strip down in the Smoking Section for an acoustic performance, including their new tune, "Teenage Unicorn Fisting." [rollingstone.com/smokingsection](http://rollingstone.com/smokingsection)

## ON ASSIGNMENT

### Coldplay

Live Tweets, pictures and our report from opening night of Coldplay's tour in Florida. [rollingstone.com/rockdaily](http://rollingstone.com/rockdaily)

Chris Martin



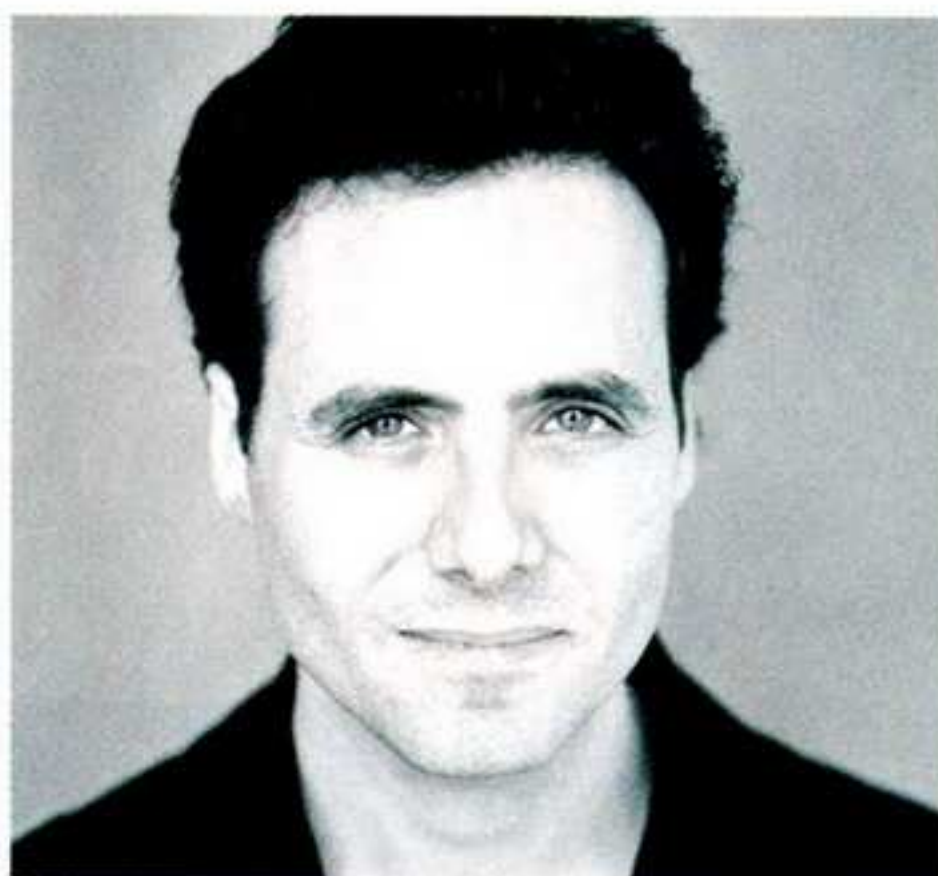


# Behind the Scenes

## And the Winner Is . . .

ON THE EVENING OF APRIL 30TH, all the bigwigs of the magazine world got together to pat themselves on the back at the annual National Magazine Awards in New York. We're happy to say that for the fifth time in the past four years – and the 15th overall – we took an award home, this time in Profile Writing, for David Lipsky's staggering, heartbreaking "The Lost Years and Last Days of David Foster Wallace" [RS 1064]. Lipsky, who had short stories published in *The New Yorker* while he was still in college, has been writing for ROLLING STONE for 14 years. He approaches his stories with extraordinary empathy. We've sent him to live with young junkies on the streets of Seattle, to get deep inside the minds and hearts of gay teenagers, and, in his craziest job of full-immersion reporting, to spend the better part of a year living at the U.S. Military Academy to write about the lives of West Point cadets. And there have been a few hardship assignments – we once forced him to spend three days with Laetitia Casta, at the time the world's hottest model.

The story that won him the award actually grew out of a piece he never wrote. In 1996, he spent a week with Wallace soon after Wallace published *Infinite Jest*, the massive novel that made his name as



**DAVID ON DAVID** Lipsky's Wallace piece won a National Magazine Award for Profile Writing.

perhaps the greatest – and certainly most innovative – novelist of his generation. Lipsky never filed the story; in fact, when Wallace did make an appearance in ROLLING STONE, it was as a writer, not a profile subject. His piece on John McCain's 2000 presidential campaign would itself win a National Magazine Award. Last fall, when we received the terrible news of Wallace's suicide, we knew we had to tell his story and tell it right. In case you missed Lipsky's piece, you can read it at [rollingstone.com/dfw](http://rollingstone.com/dfw). I think you'll agree that this was an award he deserves.

—WILL DANA, *Managing Editor*

## From the Vault RS 422, May 24th, 1984



### On the Cover

"One time at Catholic school I scratched this girl's back. I was nine, and she was twelve. A nun ran in, ripped me off her back, threw me against the lockers, beat the shit out of me and called me a lesbian. I didn't know what a lesbian was."

—Cyndi Lauper, from "Dream Girl," by Kurt Loder

### The 1984 Primaries

George Wallace was never able to grasp genuine political power because everyone in the Democratic Party understood that the core of his appeal was anti-black sentiment. . . . Jesse Jackson now has a similar problem: the whiff of anti-Semitism in his public persona. It contradicts everything he is trying to do and may prove fatal to his long-term prospects.

—From "If Jackson Divides the Democrats He Could End Up a Black George Wallace," by William Greider

### Album Review

**R.E.M., *Reckoning* ★★★★★**

R.E.M.'s music is able to involve the listener on both an emotional and intellectual level. "Jefferson, I think we're lost," cries Stipe at *Reckoning*'s end, but I doubt it. These guys seem to know exactly where they're going, and following them should be fun.

—Christopher Connelly

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# Correspondence

## { Love Letters & Advice }



### Southern Kings

ROLLING STONE RETURNS to its roots with "God, the Devil and Kings of Leon" [RS 1077]. The Kings may have been destined for success since "Molly's Chambers" and "Holy Roller Novocaine," but it certainly wasn't handed to them. And Austin Scaggs' reporting takes us all the way behind the scenes, rather than just a perfunctory interview.

*Spencer M. Ross, Rego Park, NY*

KINGS OF LEON ON THE COVER OF ROLLING STONE: It's about fucking time.

*Tom Bratt, Chicago*

LOVED YOUR COVER STORY on Kings of Leon. The article was amazingly in-depth and descriptive, and it showed music isn't just about fame, money and drunken nights with \$500 whiskey. It's about brotherly love, believing in yourself, accepting others, being open to change and, last but not least, having a unique story to tell and not being afraid to share it with the world.

*Alecia Sellers, Dallas*

SURE, "SEX ON FIRE" INCITED a flock of douches to go to the shows, but as Caleb Followill said, "It is what it is." Let's hope the Kings put the wine down and pick up the whiskey for a few tracks on the next album.

*Sean Henry Flynn, Charlotte, NC*

BY DRESSING KINGS OF LEON like the Band (in upstate New York, no less), you make an unfair comparison. KOL are a great rock band, and it's nice to see them succeed, but the Band were one of the highest expressions of musical intellect the rock genre has ever produced. A hundred years from now, people will still listen to "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down." "Sex on Fire"? With all due respect to KOL, I doubt it.

*Lex P. Levy, Coeur d'Alene, ID*

KOL ARE A TIRED ROCK CLICHÉ. The meteoric rise of a group of young white dudes? I mean, come on: booze, model girlfriends, cars, houses – it's not the Seventies anymore.

*Mike Howard, Monroe, OH*

I HAD RECENTLY LOST FAITH in rock with most of the shit being released, but those Followill boys have restored it.

*Nichole Kleckner, Chicago*

THANKS FOR THE ENLIGHTENING article on Kings of Leon. Years ago, I took one look at them and figured I wouldn't like their music at all. After reading the piece, I checked them out, and now I'm hooked. Thanks for bringing me to the light.

*Allison West, Atlanta*

### Hulk's Last Fight

FROM DYLAN TO OBAMA, your magazine has covered many iconic figures. But I never would have guessed that one of the most intimate, heartbreaking and painfully honest portraits I'd read in RS would be about Hulk Hogan ["Hulk at Twilight," RS 1077]. Thanks for the great article.

*Jon LaFollette  
Indianapolis*

I AM IN TEARS AFTER FINISHING Erik Hedegaard's article on Hulk Hogan. While I was growing up, Hulk was

so beloved to every kid on my block and gave us hope that good would ultimately triumph over evil. Reading the article, I could viscerally feel the tug of war he experiences daily between the pain in his body and his quest to regain joy in his life.

*Lori Childs, Rockland, MA*

HULK IS WORLD-FAMOUS and in the prime of his life. He has a hot young girlfriend, lives in a beach house, drives a truck that moves like a 'Vette, projects a great attitude and sports biceps that could crack Hedegaard's skull like a walnut. If this looks like a man "at

**"I never would have guessed that I'd read an intimate and heartbreaking portrait of Hulk Hogan in RS."**

twilight," you're living in the wrong universe.

*D. Scott Wilson, Grants Pass, OR*

HOW PATHETIC CAN THIS man get? To say he "totally understands O.J." is offensive to those of us who have been or know victims of violent crimes. Hulk Hogan complains about how battered his body is, but at least he can walk, unlike the young man hurt in his son's car crash. It ain't easy for him either, brother.

*Debbie Flores, Newark, CA*

### End of the Party

I ENJOYED "THE CLASS Clowns" [RS 1077], by Matt Taibbi. He is spot-on in his descriptions of the Republicans as having lost the plot as far as the responsibilities of politics are concerned. I understand the necessity of a loyal opposition, but the Republicans are completely AWOL in that regard.

*Barbara Stolarski  
Torrance, CA*

I AGREE WITH TAIBBI THAT the Republicans look more like a bad comedy act than a thoughtful opposition, but I would remind us to not get too arrogant. If the economic meltdown had not happened, we might all be going to bed at night praying for God to keep President McCain healthy. No matter how bad the Republicans behave, there will always be people in this country who will believe what the GOP tells them.

*Peter Petito, Corona, CA*

TAIBBI HAS DONE IT AGAIN. His piece on the buffoonery of the current Republican Party is right on. Why do the mainstream media continue to treat these clowns so seriously?

*Myra Jones, Bradenton, FL*

### Rob Returns

I AM INSANELY EXCITED that Rob Sheffield will once again be penning columns for your magazine ["Trapped in

the Cubicle," RS 1077]. His ideas on pop culture have always been one of the most entertaining parts of RS for me.

*Alyssa Hary, Evansville, IN*

### Cosmic Reunion

THANKS FOR THE GREAT photo by Max Vadukul of the legendary Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr [Close-Up, RS 1077]. They are aging with grace and humor, and still rocking. I fell in love with them in 1963. They expanded my world then – they still do in 2009.

*Sonia Worthington  
Via the Internet*

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## WOODSTOCK TURNS 40

A guide to the best anniversary movies, books, albums and events. **Page 16**

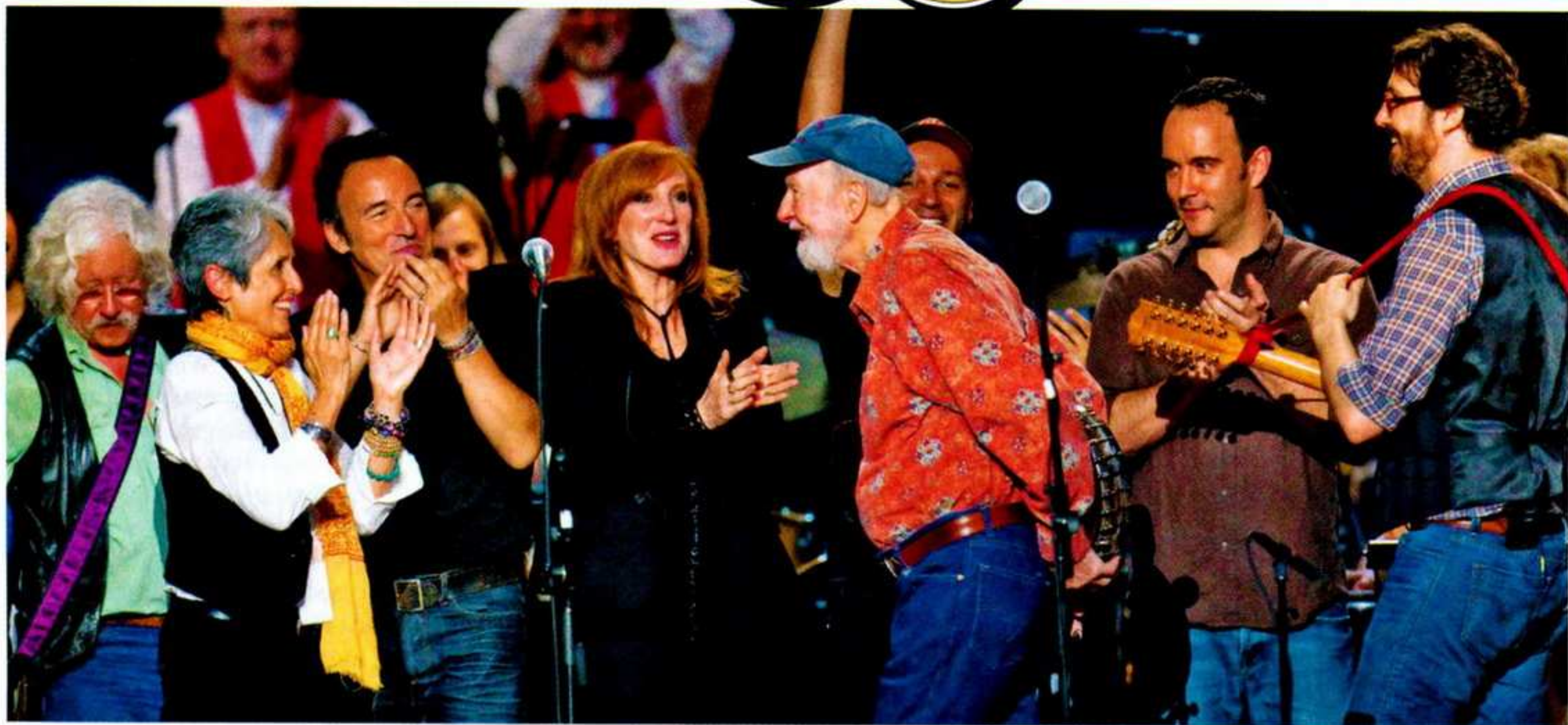
## IN THE STUDIO

Emo-pop crew Paramore channel Pumpkins, Arcade Fire on third LP. **Page 19**

## HOT SUMMER TOURS

The lowdown on 57 of the season's biggest, from U2 to No Doubt. **Page 23**

# Rock & Roll



**SING OUT!** Arlo Guthrie, Joan Baez, Bruce Springsteen, Patti Scialfa, Pete Seeger, Tom Morello, Dave Matthews and Seeger's grandson Tao Rodriguez-Seeger (from left) onstage. The all-star crew ended the gig with "This Little Light of Mine" and the Seeger classic "Goodnight Irene."

## Pete Seeger's All-Star Birthday Jam

Backstage with Springsteen, Baez, Mellencamp and more in New York

By Brian Hiatt

**A**S PLANS CAME TOGETHER FOR a 90th-birthday concert for Pete Seeger at Madison Square Garden, Bruce Springsteen, John Mellencamp, Dave Matthews and four dozen other artists jumped onboard – but the folk legend needed persuading. “Normally, I’m against

### TRIBUTE

big things,” Seeger said backstage at the May 3rd event, which raised money for Seeger’s Hudson River Sloop Clearwater foundation. “I think the world’s going to be solved by millions of small things.” He was ultimately won over by his grandson Tao Rodriguez-Seeger, who told him, “We can put together a concert for 18,000 people where everyone will feel like everyone else’s

neighbor, and everyone will sing along and feel that healing bond.”

Seeger’s career as a musician and activist goes back to the Thirties and Forties, when he sang with Woody Guthrie – but his influence may have peaked in the Sixties, when he was a key figure in the folk revival, even as he was banned from TV and many venues in a Red Scare blacklist. And it was the Sixties spirit that prevailed at the celebration. “Pete was definitely a founding father of the whole hippie thing,” says Roger McGuinn, who was backed by members of Band of Horses as he sang the Byrds’ version of Seeger’s “Turn! Turn! Turn!”

Strangers held hands as an all-star group that included Joan Baez and Billy Bragg sang “We Shall Overcome,” and the audience erupted at the opening notes of Richie Havens’ Woodstock anthem “Freedom.” The show ended with all of the night’s performers – including a spry, beaming Seeger – onstage for “This [Cont. on 15]

## Soundtrack for the Recession Takes Shape

Artists from Jimmy Buffett to Cam’ron try to ease the pain

By Brian Hiatt

**J**UST ONE BONA FIDE HIT SONG has emerged so far from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression: country star John Rich’s populist protest “Shuttin’ Detroit Down,” which bemoans “big shots whinin’ on my evening news” while average Americans lose their jobs. But whether it’s new topical tunes like Neil Young’s “Cough Up the Bucks,” the Flatlanders’ “Homeland Refugee” or Cam’ron’s “I Hate My Job,” or recession-themed covers from Bruce Springsteen, Wilco and Lucinda Williams, a soundtrack for hard times is emerging – even as some artists slash ticket prices so fans can afford to hear it. “Artists can say things in their songs that bring a little bit of relief,”



says Rich. "For people that are having a hard time, 'Shuttin' Detroit Down' says what they scream at their television set every night."

In the wake of Obama's inauguration, songwriters from Eddie Vedder to Jon Bon Jovi spoke of writing optimistic new songs – the flip side of the flood of protest music that accompanied Bush's terms. But the national mood shifted quickly. Springsteen's new album, *Working on a Dream*, which came out a week after Obama's inauguration, is full of love songs and optimism; but on the current tour with the E Street Band, he's emphasizing old songs about economic struggle such as "The Ghost of Tom Joad" and the Reagan-era "Seeds" and "Johnny 99." Springsteen is also covering

**"During hard times, people always need entertainment," says Lucinda Williams.**

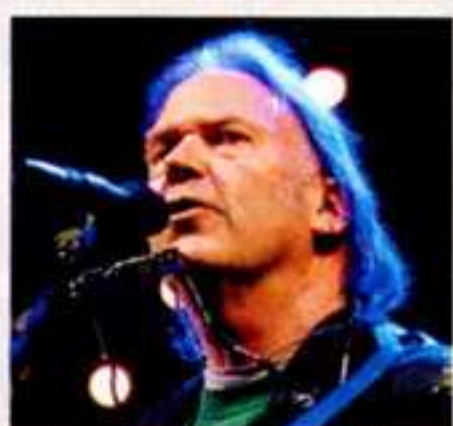
the 1854 Stephen Foster standard "Hard Times Come Again No More" each night, preceded by a speech urging fans to give to local food banks: "During these hard times, if you can, give a hand."

Williams is offering fans a discount on tour merch, while covering a similarly themed song at some shows: Skip James' chilling "Hard Times Killing Floor Blues." Wilco, meanwhile, is offering a downloadable cover of Woody Guthrie's Depression-era protest tune "The Jolly Banker," asking fans to pay for it with a donation to the Woody Guthrie Foundation – unless they're unemployed. "I've been thinking about the Depression days and Woody Guthrie," says Williams. "People always need entertainment during times of hardship. I see myself as kind of having a responsibility to the people."

David Crosby is pleased that the times are pushing musicians to look toward the likes of Guthrie and Pete Seeger (see page 13). "The value of those guys is inestimable," Crosby says. "But it goes back even further. We're direct descendants of troubadours and town cri-

## Workingman's Blues: Best Recession Tunes

**From Detroit layoffs to Madoff's rip-off, artists are finding inspiration in the economic meltdown**



### Neil Young "Cough Up the Bucks"

This ramshackle, "Welfare Mothers"-style rocker from Young's new *Fork in the Road* asks the simple questions that have been bedeviling the world for months: "Where did all the money go?/Where did all the cash flow?/Where did all the revenue stream?"



### Jimmy Buffett "A Lot to Drink About"

In a bluesy tune released as a raucous live video clip, Buffett finds the lighter side of the economic collapse: "Madoff made off with all the money," he sings. "Now his clients are down to skunkweed/It's so easy to see/We're only talking simple greed."



### Cam'ron "I Hate My Job"

Harlem-raised rapper Cam'ron gets grittily realistic on this blue-collar narrative, which suggests that having a miserable minimum-wage job is nearly as bad as not being able to find any job at all. "I got my check/Now I feel disrespected," he raps. "Lookin' for a job, ain't nobody hiring."



### John Rich "Shuttin' Detroit Down"

On this quietly moving country tune (with a video starring Kris Kristofferson and Mickey Rourke as autoworkers), the Nashville star laments the idea of Main Street paying for corporate titans' mistakes: "They're living it up on Wall Street... Here in the real world, they're shutting Detroit down."



### The Flatlanders "Homeland Refugee"

The bleakest of the new recession songs (from the team of Joe Ely, Jimmie Dale Gilmore and Butch Hancock) is narrated by an American who followed all the rules but lost his house "when the deal went bust/To the so-called security and trust."

ers: 'It's 12:00, and all's well,' or, 'It's 11:30, and we're in deep doo-doo.'"

The handful of original songs that have come out of the crisis offers a variety of moods: Some, like Jimmy Buffett's darkly funny "A Lot to Drink About," Prince's "Ol' Skool Company" and Rich's tune, are aggrieved responses to bailouts and other Wall Street outrages. Jadakiss' "Hard Times" and Cam'ron's "I Hate My Job" are each plain-spoken laments about the recession's human toll, while the Flatlanders' "Homeland Refugee" offers a bleak vision: the Okie migration that Guthrie wrote about, but in reverse, with

its narrator heading from California back to the Dust Bowl. Flatlander Joe Ely co-wrote "Homeland" as the mortgage crisis began, and he was unnerved to find how prophetic it became. "By the time the record came out, the situation had actually gotten even worse, with people living in tents around San Francisco," he says. "People really zoom in on that song when we're playing it."

Country and hip-hop artists have been quickest to address the recession in song – enough rappers are now chronicling blue-collar struggles that the hip-hop blog Dutty Artz has a recurring feature on "Recession

Rap Jams." "Our songs tend to be more linear," says alt-country singer Todd Snider, whose new album, *The Excitement Plan*, is full of tough-times-themed tunes. "And we also tend to sing about our lives instead of dragons and wolves from the mountain of fire and stuff. Jim Morrison would have had a hard time addressing this."

On tour, some acts are cutting frills to bring costs in line with lower ticket prices: Fall Out Boy have scaled back on pyrotechnics and other stage trickery; Crosby, Stills and Nash plan to stay in less-luxurious hotels on their summer tour; Rise Against have stopped shipping their guitars from venue to venue. "Our stage show is dramatically smaller," says Fall Out Boy's Pete Wentz. "We decided to use different imagery and make it more theatrical to make up for the fact that we're not gonna be blowing stuff up every five seconds."

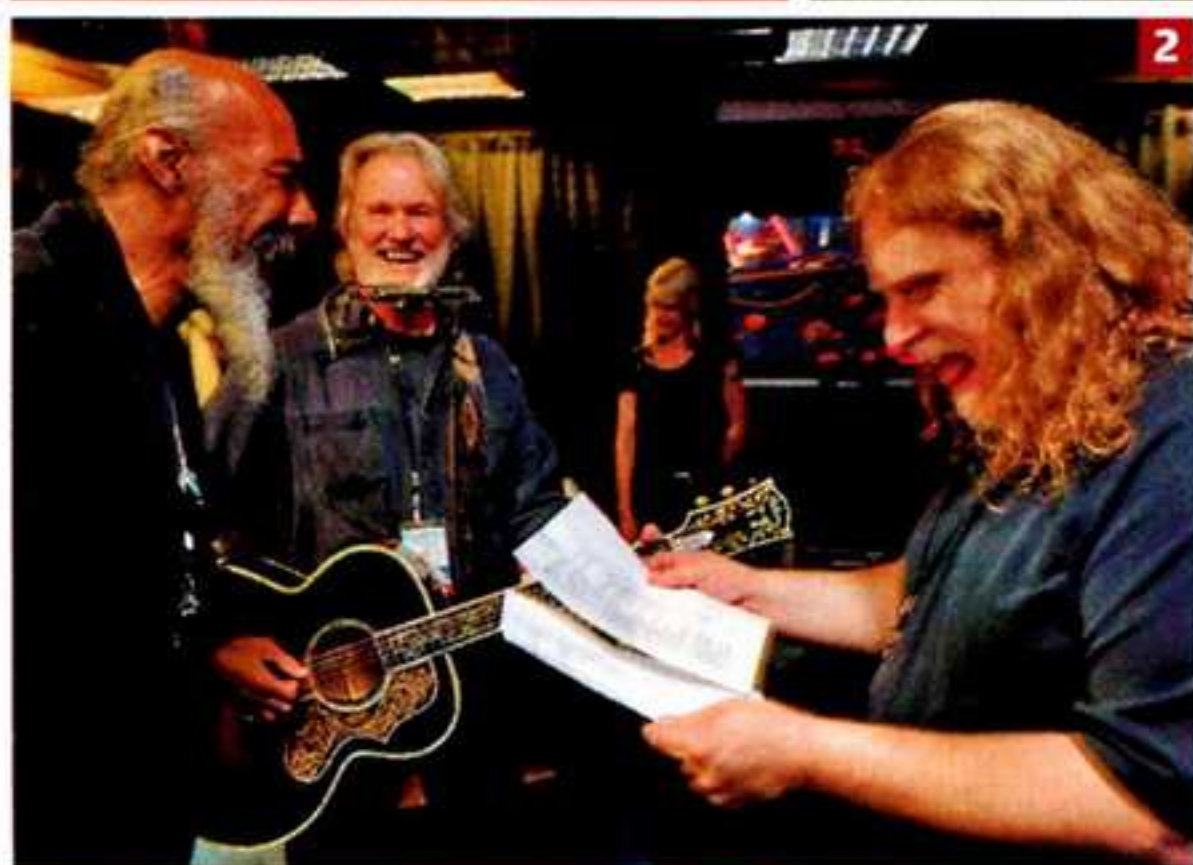
Some of those theatrics directly address current events: At one point in their show, Fall Out Boy take the stage dressed as bloody bankers – the idea is that they've been attacked by angry citizens. But other bands in FOB's genre aren't following their lead: At May's emo-heavy Bamboozle festival in New Jersey, the economy hardly came up. "Hard times make for more artistic opportunity, but I wouldn't look to emo for any of that," says Taking Back Sunday singer Adam Lazzara. Adds the band's bassist, Matt Rubano, "It's a drag to see people singing about champagne and shoes and bullshit when the world is falling apart."

But other artists say that the best role they can play is to offer an escape. "I have friends who are seeing the darker corners as a result of this economy," says Dave Matthews. "I hope that we're a distraction. I don't know if people want to go to a show and hear about the hard economic times. They might want to walk in and say, 'Thank God I'm here. Hopefully I can afford a hamburger on the way home.' I hope people feel inspired leaving here and that the weight of the world is not squarely on their shoulders, even if it's only for a couple of seconds." 



## Seeger Session

(1) Springsteen, who was among some 50 artists honoring Seeger, hailed the folk icon as "a living archive of America's music." (2) Havens, Kristofferson and Warren Haynes go over lyrics. (3) Baez with Oscar the Grouch. (4) Mellencamp and Earle backstage. (5) Seeger at the afterparty.



PETE SEEGER

[Cont. from 13] Little Light of Mine" and "Goodnight Irene," best known as a Number One hit for Seeger's Fifties group the Weavers. "Pete hasn't lost a step," says Kris Kristofferson, who sang "Hole in the Bucket."

Backstage, artists spanning generations and genres – the performers ranged from Tom Morello and Ben Harper to Emmylou Harris and Steve Earle – praised Seeger as an essential inspiration. Baez and Matthews each recalled their families taking them to his concerts as kids. "My parents sneakily devised a plan to get me away from the blues, so they spirited me away to a concert of Pete Seeger's, and it was like a vaccine that took," says Baez. Adds Matthews, "He was my first concert, and I remember it well. He represents a pretty uniquely righteous kind of person, and it would be better if there was more of them around."



In Seeger's collaborative spirit, the night was full of artist pairings. Morello was a frequent presence onstage: He sang Seeger's anti-war song "Waist Deep in the Big Muddy" with Taj Mahal and later accompanied Springsteen on "The Ghost of Tom Joad." "The history of Pete's life is the history of music changing the world," Morello says. Onstage, Springsteen hailed the inspiration for his *Seeger Sessions* album and tour as a "living archive of America's music and conscience": "Pete,

you outlasted the bastards, man," he said, remembering that Seeger was determined to sing the oft-omitted final verses of "This Land Is Your Land" at the Obama inauguration concert on the Mall, in Washington, D.C. "Of course, that's what Pete's done his whole life. He sings all the verses all the time – especially the ones that we would like to leave out of our history as a people."

Mellencamp opened the show with the first song he had learned to play as a child, Seeger's "If I Had a Hammer," before playing his own Seeger-inspired "A Ride Back Home." "Pete Seeger has been in my life as long as I can remember," says Mellencamp, adding that seeing Seeger still playing at 90 was a powerful experience. "I'm trying to find a way to be age-appropriate with what I do – and it gives you inspiration to see somebody like that." **3**

# HOT LIST



DAVE MATTHEWS BAND

## "Funny the Way It Is"

On the sleek lead single from DMB's most rocking album ever, our man Dave observes that "somebody's going hungry/And someone is eating out." Speaking of, have you seen Domino's new Bread Bowl Pasta? Yikes!

## LITTLE BOOTS

### "New in Town" video

Brit dance-pop cutie Little Boots is so damn fresh in her new video that everyone she meets – from gangbangers to some bums under a bridge – start dancing like they think she's Bob Fosse.

## DINOSAUR JR.

### "I Want You to Know"

Our theory is Dino guitar god J Mascis somehow turned his Fender Jazzmaster into a time machine, traveled back to 1989 and unearthed this killer eardrum-scorcher.

## BLACK MOTH SUPER RAINBOW

### "Dark Bubbles" video

The Pittsburgh psychonauts' oddly soothing new online clip features a dude in a bedazzled hoodie jumping on a trampoline. It's like slipping into a warm bath of Ambien.

## WAYNE MARSHALL

### "Blame It on the Weed"

Jamie Foxx's radio-killing ode to bottle service gets a THC-infused dancehall makeover that makes us want to crank the vaporizer to 11.



Carlos Santana, who took mescaline before his set, onstage at Woodstock



## Woodstock Celebrates 40th Anniversary With Movies, Music

A guide to the best looks back, from Ang Lee's movie to a new box set

By Andy Greene

**I**N AUGUST, ON THE 40TH anniversary of Woodstock, Levon Helm, Jefferson Starship, Mountain, Canned Heat and Country Joe will return to the original site in Bethel, New York, for a reunion show. But even though it's the only official

### FLASHBACK

concert planned, there won't be any shortage of Woodstock nostalgia this summer, with a flood of books, movies and CDs in the works. Here are five of the best looks back:



**Oscar-Winning Doc Gets Expanded Edition** Michael Wadleigh's *Woodstock* is coming to Blu-ray and DVD on June 9th with remastered sound and more than two

hours of previously unreleased performances by the Grateful Dead, Creedence Clearwater Revival and others. "The first cut was about 16 hours," says Wadleigh. "We wanted to make three two-hour movies, but Warner Bros. wouldn't go for it."



Kelli Garner, Demetri Martin and Paul Dano (from left) in Ang Lee's Woodstock comedy

### Ang Lee's New Comedy: 'Taking Woodstock'

Based on the autobiography of Elliot Tiber, an interior designer who helped create the festival. *Daily Show* vet Demetri Martin plays Tiber, Liev Schreiber plays a transvestite Tiber befriends, and Eugene Levy is the farmer Max Yasgur. "The cast is insanely fresh," producer James Schamus says. "This is about play and fun, and it has hopeful spirit." Out August 14th.

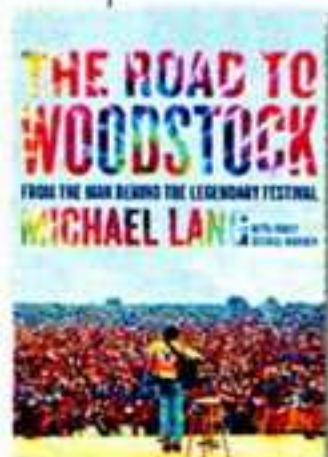
### Museum, Concerts at Original Site

The new Museum at Bethel Woods, on the site of the festival, gives visitors a sense of what it was like to be there in 1969, with rare artifacts, seldom-seen footage and oral histories. To commemorate the 40th anniversary, Richie Havens is coming to the museum

on August 14th to sing "Freedom" – the impromptu song that closed out his legendary Woodstock set. Also on the site is a 15,000-seat amphitheater, where Bob Dylan's tour makes a stop on July 18th.

### Six-CD Box Set Unearths Rare Tunes

The original three-LP set has been expanded into a six-CD box set (out August 18th) – and, for the first time, it includes music from all 31 performers. More than 30 songs have been added, including newly released tunes from Jefferson Airplane ("The Other Side of This Life") and the Grateful Dead ("Dark Star").



### New Memoir From Concert's Producer

Woodstock producer Michael Lang's *The Road to Woodstock* (out in July) tells the story of the

show, from pursuing Dylan to battling a furious Bill Graham over bookings to persuading the Who to play even though there wasn't money yet to pay them. Recalling Jimi Hendrix's show-closing set, Lang writes that it was "a wake-up call to fix the things that are broken in our society."

## IN THE NEWS

### Pearl Jam Bassist Attacked at Studio

Pearl Jam bassist Jeff Ament was the victim of a violent robbery outside Southern Tracks Recording studios in Atlanta, where the band is recording a new album with producer **Brendan O'Brien**. According to a police report, Ament and a band employee



pulled up to the rear of a studio on the afternoon of April 27th when three assailants emerged from the woods wearing masks and brandishing knives. The robbers smashed the windows of a rented Jeep and stole \$3,000 in cash and \$4,320 worth of goods. Ament was chased and knocked to the ground, sustaining a head laceration. No arrests have been made. Pearl Jam declined to comment.

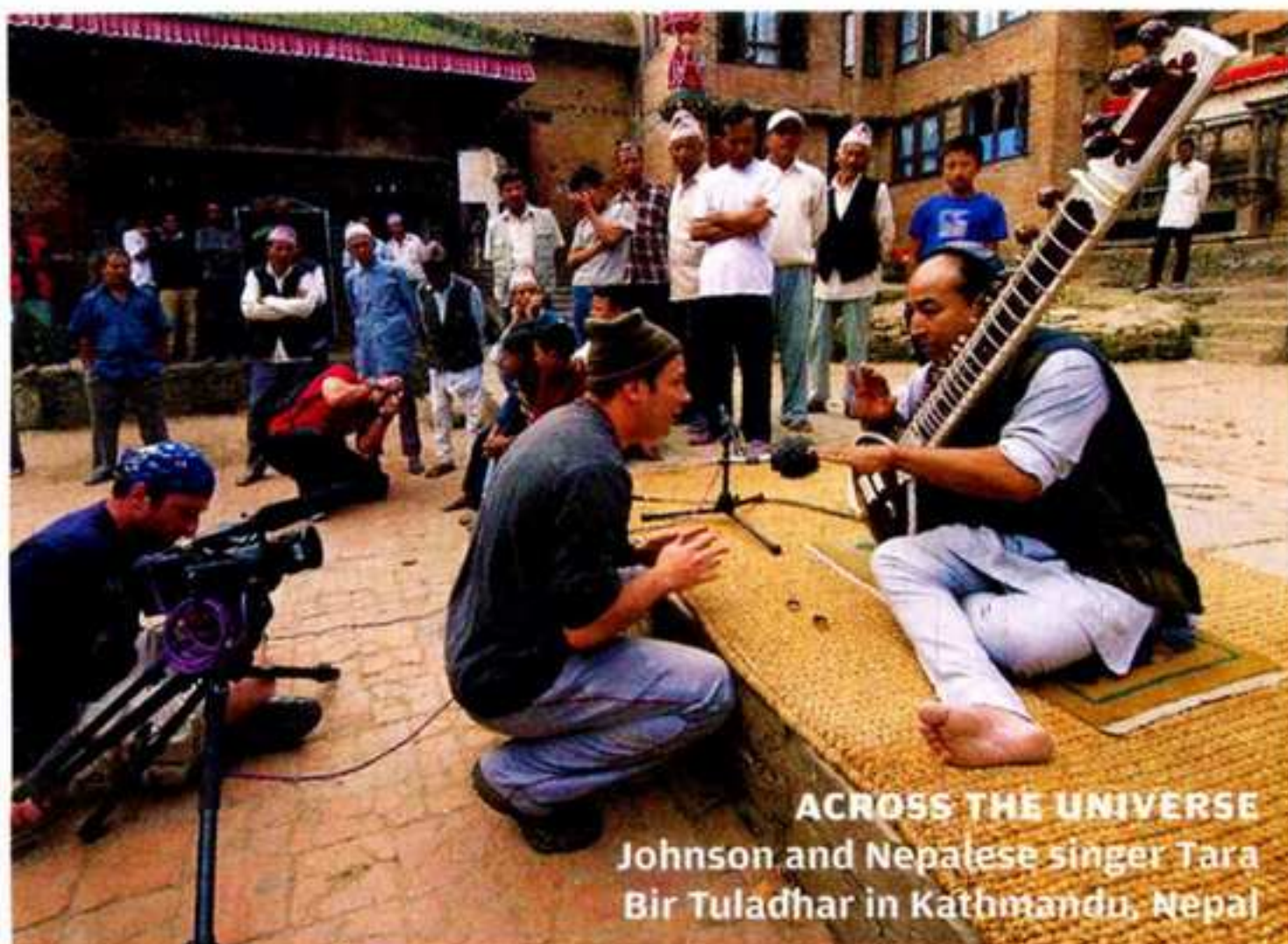
### Shins Channel Police on New CD

For the Shins' fourth record, leader **James Mercer** is determined to shake up the band's sound – to get there, he went as far as firing two founding members, keyboardist Marty Crandall and drummer Jesse Sandoval. "I'm just trying to keep myself inspired," says Mercer, who adds that the new disc has songs that resemble the Police and Television. "It'll be more rhythmic and uptempo." The album is due early next year on Mercer's own imprint, Aural Apothecary.

### Ex-Wilco Member Sues Jeff Tweedy

**Jay Bennett**, the multi-instrumentalist who left Wilco in 2001, sued frontman **Jeff Tweedy** for breach of contract on May 4th, demanding \$50,000 in damages. In his lawsuit, Bennett claims Tweedy owes him money for his appearance in the 2002 documentary *I Am Trying to Break Your Heart* and unpaid royalties. Tweedy responded, "I have done nothing wrong. . . . This will be handled fairly and swiftly."





ACROSS THE UNIVERSE  
Johnson and Nepalese singer Tara  
Bir Tuladhar in Kathmandu, Nepal

## Street Musicians Score Top 10 Hit

Cross-cultural disc of  
buskers, world musicians  
is unlikely chart success

By Andy Greene

UNITING A BLIND NEW Orleans soul singer, an Irish children's choir and Tibetan monks, *Playing for Change* is the unlikely hit album of the year. Debuting at Number 10 in early May, the CD features a mix of street per-

### CHART WATCH

formers and musicians from around the planet – and Bono and Manu Chao – playing 10 covers, including Sam Cooke's "A Change Is Gonna Come," Peter Gabriel's "Biko" and Bob Marley's "One Love." "Never in my wildest dreams did I expect to ever have a Top 10 album," says Clarence Bekker, a Dutch busker who has sung on the streets of Barcelona for eight years and plays on a cover of "Stand by Me." "It's a dream come true."

The disc, which is featured prominently in Starbucks stores, is the brainchild of L.A. recording engineer Mark Johnson, who spent four years traveling the world filming and recording the artists. Inspiration came in 2005, when Johnson stumbled upon street performer Roger Ridley singing a rendition of "Stand by Me" near the Santa Monica Pier. "I told him I'd love to record his performance and take it around the world, with other people

adding to his track," Johnson recalls. "He looked at me like I was crazy."

Traveling with lightweight digital gear, Johnson visited 12 countries seeking out local talent. Each track edits together disparate artists – sometimes taped thousands of miles apart – into cross-cultural mash-ups. "Stand by Me" combines 37 musicians, including Native American drummers, a Russian cellist and a South African choir, into a seamless track. A YouTube video of the recording process, posted in November, has already drawn more than 10 million views. "The focal point of most records is a single person or band," Johnson says. "The focal point of these songs is the human race."

TV producer Norman Lear heard about *Playing for Change* after a documentary about Johnson's project screened at 2008's Tribeca Film Festival. "It clicked with me instantly," says Lear, who released the CD through his Concord Music Group. Lear also showed the film to Bono, who added vocals to a version of Marley's "War." The film will be shown on PBS and released on DVD later this year.

A tour is in the works, as are future recordings by more street musicians. "We have to keep going," says Johnson. "Watching people from the world sing together makes our differences seem so small and makes it feel like we'll persevere as a human race." **ES**

## Smoking Section

BY AUSTIN SCAGGS

**C**oldplay have played 102 dates in 22 countries over the past year, and they're about to launch a 35-date U.S. run. How have they been spending their spare time? Holed up in their London studio with **Brian Eno**. "We've been conducting experiments, trying to add some new strings to our bow, going on strange tangents," says guitarist **Jonny Buckland**. "We've been trying to push ourselves." (**Chris Martin** has promised a new album by year's end, but time will tell.) On the U.S. tour, ticket buyers will be treated to a free nine-track CD, featuring recent live highlights like "Glass of Water," "42" and "Clocks." "There was a good gig in Paris that will be featured a bit," says Buckland, "but there are recordings from the U.S., Australia, South America." These days when the band hits the road, the guys bring along their kids. "It definitely stops you from drinking every night – there's no need to be out until 5 a.m., so we don't get burned out," Buckland says. "Someone should've told those Eighties bands."

For the past month, **Kid Rock**'s been in his home studio outside Detroit, crafting the follow-up to 2007's double-platinum *Rock N Roll Jesus*. "We have about 12 songs so far – everyone who's heard it says it's my best stuff yet," says Rock, who's working with *Jesus* alum Marlon Young on guitar, and a vocalist



Kid Rock

named Herschel Boone, who sings backup for Mary J. Blige and is encouraging Rock to discover his inner Marvin Gaye: "He's got me singing in different ways, and it's worked out really well. But there are still rock songs and a country flavor." If the stars align, the album may be out as

soon as November, by which point Rock hopes to unveil his own quaff, Bad Ass Beer. "It's good American light beer," says Rock, who's been hard at work on the ad campaign. "The ideas are endless – we've got one where it looks like a Bad Ass beer is fucking the St. Pauli girl."

**I**t's risky to disregard everything we've ever done and dive into this dance world," says the **Black Eyed Peas** rapper-producer **Will.i.am** of "Boom Boom Pow," their chart-topping, electro-influenced new single. "We went to a whole new scene and started from square one." Inspired by a crazy night of clubbing in Sydney, the Peas' June release, *The E.N.D.*, reboots the hip-hop act's sound with techno beats, Auto-Tune and future funk. Right now, the Peas are prepping for an upcoming world tour, which kicks off in September. Will promises a high-tech spectacle – think something as eye-popping as his election-night CNN hologram. "We have this technology where they took images of all of our faces and combined them digitally," says Will. "We're taking that shit to a whole different fucking level and shit. The shit is fucking nuts."



# Paramore Move Beyond Pop Punk With 'Riot!' Follow-Up

**Album** Title TBD  
**Due Out** September 9th

By Matt Diehl

**T**HAT'S THE AMP THAT *Dookie* was done on!" says Paramore lead guitarist-songwriter, Josh Farro, 21, pointing to a Marshall amp head hanging in the control room of producer Rob Cavallo's home studio, perched high on a hill overlooking Los Angeles. Adds singer Hayley Williams, 20, "We actually used the acoustic guitar that Green Day wrote 'Time of My Life' on. We got the magic on there!"

The Franklin, Tennessee, pop punks – who went platinum with their second album, the 2007 disc *Riot!* – felt intense pressure to graduate sonically on their as-yet-untitled third album. "We were worried that we were never going to have another song like [*Riot!*'s hit single] 'Misery Business,'" Williams says. Adds Farro, "*Riot!* was a kiddie album, but we had to do that to get to this point."

After spending a month in their Tennessee rehearsal space honing new material written on the road over the last year, Paramore began recording with



**SCREAM QUEEN**  
Paramore singer  
Hayley Williams  
in Los Angeles

Cavallo in March, with just five weeks to finish the disc before hitting the road with No Doubt. Cavallo, who's worked with everyone from Green Day to Dave Matthews Band, made sure to keep the band well-fueled during the sessions, with a dedicated soft-serve ice cream machine and dinners cooked by the producer himself. "They had blinders on and just charged ahead," he says. "You don't want to get in the way."

According to Cavallo – whom the band first worked with on "Decode," its hit single from the *Twilight* soundtrack – the rapid pace didn't affect

quality. "The album totally rocks, yet it's also very subtle," he says. "It's got great writing – much more sophisticated than you'd think." Indeed, songs like "Brick by Boring Brick" weave unexpected Smashing Pumpkins-style sonics into the mix, while "Playing God" has a surging bridge that shows the influence of Arcade Fire. "Exception" is a subtle, Radiohead-esque ballad that Williams won't confirm is about her own rumored paramour, New Found Glory's Chad Gilbert. "Read a couple of blogs, and you'll figure it out," Williams says coyly.

## Tom Morello Debuts Heavy New Duo

**Album** Street Sweeper Social Club

**Due Out** June 16th

By David Browne

**A**FTER TWO ALBUMS OF mellow folk as the Nightwatchman, Tom Morello has plugged back in. "This is the heaviest, hardest-rockin' music I've been involved with in a long time," says the guitarist of his new project, Street Sweeper Social Club, a collaboration with rapper Boots Riley of the politically charged hip-hop act the Coup.

The two men met in 2003 and have crossed paths often: Morello contributed to a Coup album, and Riley joined



**PLUGGED IN** The Coup's Boots Riley and Tom Morello recording in Los Angeles

Morello on a few solo shows. In 2007, after the breakup of Audioslave, Morello approached Riley to do something more formal. "He didn't ask me," recalls the Bay Area MC. "He said, 'We're gonna make a group. It's gonna be anthems for the revolution.'"

The duo, with Galactic's Stanton Moore on drums, blasted out the basic tracks in a week in L.A. The results resemble a funkier Rage Against the Machine, fusing Morello's machine-gun guitars and Riley's class-warfare rhymes on "Clap for the Killers" and "Fight! Smash! Win!"

Street Sweeper will road-test the material as the opener on the Jane's Addiction/NIN tour. As for the inevitable comparisons with his old group, Morello says, "I haven't really thought about it yet. These days I just love following my muse."

## IN THE NEWS

### (RED) Campaign Preps Concerts

Fall Out Boy, Santigold, All-American Rejects and O.A.R. are some of the artists who have signed on to participate in the new (RED)NIGHTS concert series, an initiative from Bono's (RED) campaign. A portion of the proceeds from each concert – there are 26 total, but not all dates have been announced – will go to the Global Fund, which raises money to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. "I've wanted to get involved in the fight against AIDS for a long time, but I wasn't sure what to do," says Santigold. "I'm glad someone found a way to make it easy to get involved." The series will culminate with a multi-act show in New York on World AIDS Day, December 1st.



F.O.B.'s Patrick Stump and Pete Wentz

## IN BRIEF

■ **Warped Tour** co-founder Kevin Lyman is putting together a traveling festival for country fans, set to debut next summer. Ticket prices will be kept low, and the tour will feature about 25 acts on several stages.

■ **White Stripes** drummer Meg White is set to marry Jackson Smith – son of Patti Smith and late MC5 guitarist Fred "Sonic" Smith – later this year. In other nuptial news, Trent Reznor recently got engaged to singer Mariqueen Maandig, of Los Angeles band West Indian Girl. A wedding date hasn't been set.

■ **Kelis** filed for divorce from Nas, her husband of five years, on April 30th. She is seven months pregnant with their first child.

■ Broadway's hair-metal musical "**Rock of Ages**" has received five Tony nominations, including one for best musical. The show, which stars ex-American Idol contestant Constantine Maroulis, chronicles life on the Sunset Strip in the 1980s with hits by Poison, Journey, Foreigner and more. The show is being turned into a feature film.





**BEAUTY AND  
THE BEAST**  
St. Vincent  
(a.k.a. Annie  
Clark)

## Brooklyn Pixie Sings Like an Angel, Shreds Like a Monster

**Indie heartthrob St. Vincent mines the dark side of Disney on new disc**  
By Melissa Maerz

**A**NNIE CLARK WANTED HER MUSIC to be magic, like something in a Disney film. So while she was writing her second album, the 26-year-old indie rocker, who records under the name St. Vincent, would stay up all night in her Brooklyn apartment watching *Sleeping Beauty* and *Beauty and the Beast*. Then she'd dream up orchestral scores for her favorite scenes – except, in her head, the fairy tales weren't for kids. "You know when music is so elegant it sounds like the clouds are parting and feathers are falling from the sky?" asks Clark. "I'd juxtapose that with something really gross." How gross? "I once heard Nick Cave's guitarist play a tone that was so disgusting, it literally made me want to vomit." She pauses, suddenly wistful. "It was awesome."

A five-foot-two-inch pixie with big china-doll eyes and fuzzy black hair, Clark doesn't look like your typical gross-out queen. But then, anyone who's heard her play guitar knows she's tougher than she looks. Today, shredding in a New York practice space, she stomps her way through a dozen guitar pedals, and it's clear she has a composer's ear for melody. Clark, who grew up in Dallas in an Irish-Catholic family with eight siblings, attended the Berklee College of Music and toured with chamber-pop maestros Sufjan Stevens and the Polyphonic Spree. But she can also destroy on guitar, grinding out visceral notes like ones her co-producer John Congleton once

described as "abortion-y." "I got this cheap 1967 Harmony Bobcat guitar with a sensitive whammy bar that I can bend really far out of tune," she says. "I wanted it to sound very human."

On her new disc, *Actor*, Clark sings like an old-world chanteuse over clarinets, violins and an Indian sarangi. Each track has a surreal quality, because Clark fills them with intentional "mistakes." On the tech-

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**"I once heard a guitar tone so disgusting it literally made me want to vomit."**

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nicolor ballad "The Strangers," a high-hat comes in just behind the beat, making the tune sound seasick. Her own voice adds to the black comedy. Whether she's confessing to grabbing Daddy's Smith & Wesson or hiding *Playboys* under a mattress, she sings like the holiest choirgirl.

Sliding down jagged guitar runs, stepping on pedals that turn simple chords into heavy, swampy ripples, looping her own voice and smothering it beneath peals of feedback, her music is always a rush that approaches something between ecstasy and disintegration. "I have this song called 'Laughing With a Mouth of Blood' – it's a term that comics use for being able to take a joke that's insulting to you, like you're laughing through your own shame and humiliation. Sometimes I feel that way when I'm performing." She laughs. "Being uncomfortable – maybe I'm just more comfortable that way." 

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# INSIDE SUMMER'S HOTTEST TOURS

## No Doubt

Through August 11th

Tickets \$25-\$300

Opener Paramore

On the second night of No Doubt's new tour, Gwen Stefani looked into the sea of fans and screamed, "I fucking love this song!" before launching into "It's My Life." It's the band's first time on the road since 2004, and the adrenaline is pumping: Stefani also climbed a lighting rig and busted out a set of push-ups during the show, which highlighted the group's hits. "We're a live band - we had to get out there and reconnect onstage," says bassist Tony Kanal, who filled us in on the band's 55-date tour.

**Why tour without a new CD?**

We need to find our muse - that's what this tour is for. Before we made *Rock Steady*, we had so much fun on the road - having dance parties - that we got excited about dancehall and went to Jamaica to record. When we started writing our new album, the inspiration was missing, so we decided to get out and play.

**Have you written any new tunes?**

There's tons of ideas, but we're not far enough along to play anything live. I put a studio on my bus, so whenever there's a long drive, I'll invite my bandmates on board to work on music.

**How is touring now that your bandmates all have kids?**

It's a totally different dynamic - there are five babies out there! Gwen and the guys have cribs on their buses; the afterparty room with the DJ rig and bar is being turned into a romper room.

**What's it like to play old songs?**

*Tragic Kingdom* songs like "Happy Now?" and "End It on This" bring back memories. We're so lucky to be doing this after 23 years. I know it's difficult for other bands, but not for us. We actually like each other. **NICOLE FREHSÉE**

FEATURING  
U2, PHISH,  
WILCO, PINK,  
CLAPTON &  
52 OTHERS



**COMEBACK KIDS**  
Stefani and Kanal  
in Atlantic City on  
opening night of  
No Doubt's first  
tour since 2004



## Aerosmith

June 10th-September 16th

Tickets \$35-\$200  
Opener ZZ Top

Steven Tyler's bout with pneumonia prevented Aerosmith from getting a new studio album out in time for this amphitheater tour, but that just means more room for rarities. "The set lists have been getting stale," says guitarist Joe Perry. "We've talked about doing an album front-to-back - probably one of the first three records. That's my next battle, to see if we can pull it off."

## Allman Brothers

Through October 17th

Tickets \$28-\$140

To celebrate their 40th anniversary, the revitalized Allmans will play more shows than they have in years, doing three-hour sets that will include a good dose of material from the Duane Allman era. Gregg Allman promises a tight performance. "It ain't about having a party," he says. "That craziness was left somewhere along the line. Then you really get down to playing music."

## Andrew Bird

June 8th-TBD

Tickets \$24-\$45

On the heels of his Top 10 hit *Noble Beast*, Bird is playing some of his biggest venues yet, including Radio City Music Hall. Though Bird is excited to see how his violin loops and jazzy band will work in large rooms, he says, "I just have to manage my adrenaline." Fans should expect plenty of tracks from *Noble Beast* as well as infrequently played older material dating back to 2001.

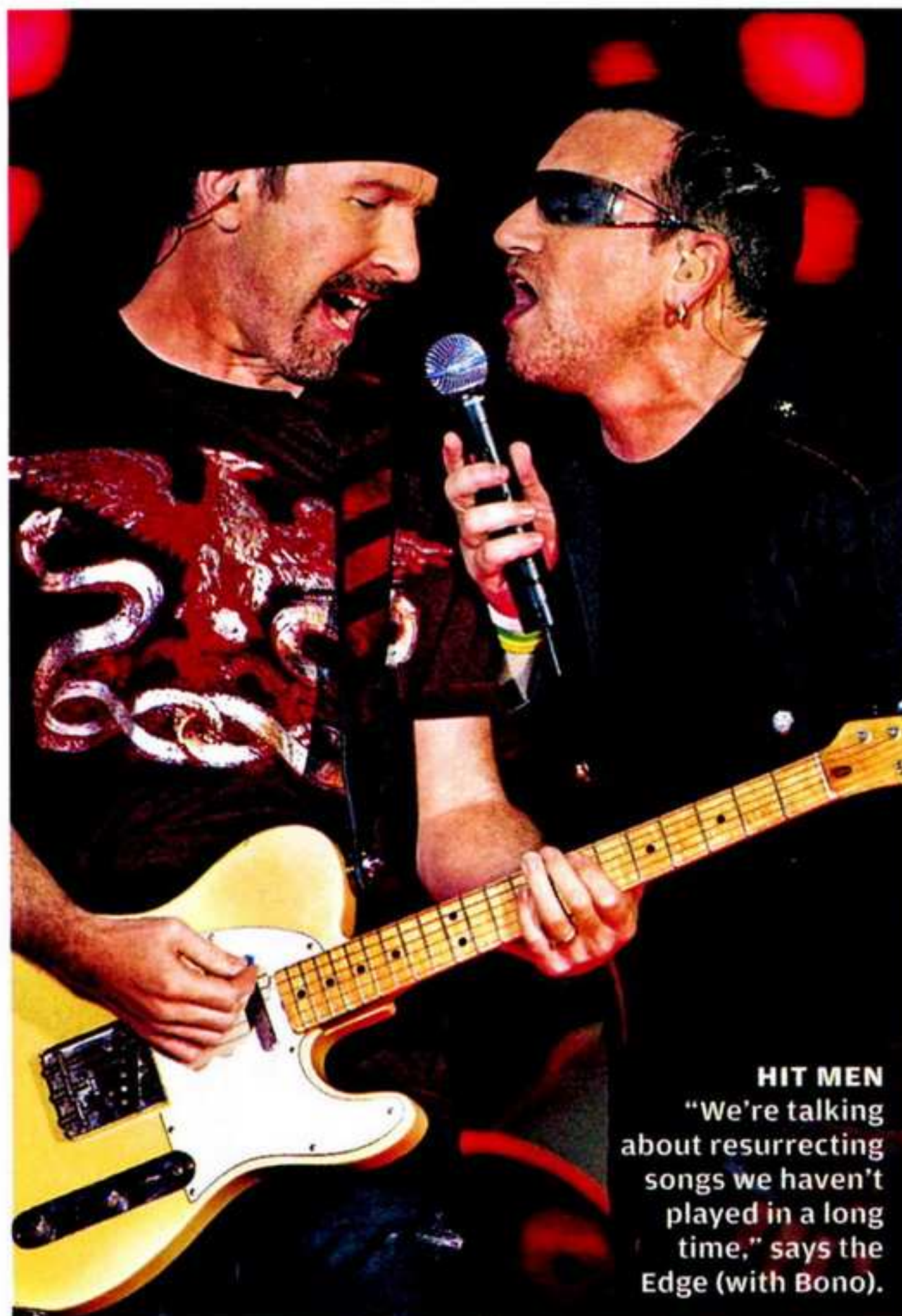
## Blink-182

July 24th-October

Tickets \$20-\$60

Openers Fall Out Boy, Weezer

For their first tour since 2005, Blink-182 are trying a new strategy: rehearsing. "We used to walk onstage and forget our parts - we just wanted to play fast and look cool," says bassist Mark Hoppus. "This time, we want to be more artistic." The trio's reunion tour will feature all their pop-punk hits and a few new songs, plus they're planning an intense light show from Daft Punk and Kanye West's set designer. "We want to use the entire arena as a lighting rig and a stage," says Hoppus. "We're being as ambitious as possible."



## U2

Sept. 12th-Oct. 28th

Tickets \$30-\$253

Openers Snow Patrol, Muse, Black Eyed Peas

Other artists may be scaling down for the recession, but not U2: Their first U.S. stadium tour since 1997's PopMart will be dominated by the largest set ever built for a rock concert, a monstrous stage nicknamed the Claw that will allow them to play in the round. "The crowd will be all around us," says the Edge, on a break from tour planning. "That energy will just make the performances fly." The band is selling some seats for as cheap as \$30, as a nod to tough times and to make the shows accessible to young fans.

**What will the set lists be like?**

We're talking about resurrecting songs we haven't played in a long time. I have a list of every U2 song - some I can't remember anymore - even some of the B sides that we've never played live. We were thinking how much fun it would be to play something like [Joshua Tree outtake] "Luminous Times." Certain songs from the last couple of tours, we may not play again. We want to find songs that feel fresh and valid.

**How much will the show change night to night?**

Our shows start to kind of connect in a very emotional and organic way, and those connections between songs, the segues, start to become like mini-movements or acts within a play. So one or two songs will be different per night, but not like eight songs per night.

**How are the new songs shaping up live?**

We'll play about half the album, and having played some in TV appearances, we know these songs translate well live. There's a few that will be up there with our best-ever live songs. Some of them we really have to rework - "Crazy Tonight" was a very keyboard-orientated song on the album, but I took it to the guitar live, and it sounds great. You make all these discoveries, and next thing you say, "Oh, shit, we should have done that on the album." Steve Lillywhite says we should record our album, put it to one side, then go on the road for a year and come back and re-record it [laughs].

**Will you get to sing a song?**

It's always a difficult thing, because we have a great singer, but, yeah, I wouldn't rule it out.

**We'd like to hear "Numb."**

OK, I'll put that in the running. We'll see! **BRIAN HIATT**

## Jackson Browne

July 7th-August 31st

Tickets \$30-\$100

The California singer-songwriter isn't sticking to a set list this summer. "In the first part of the set I play a lot of [2008's] *Time the Conqueror*," Browne says. "The second part I leave open. If someone calls out for 'Sky Blue and Black' really passionately, I'll try and do it." On this outing, Browne is adding two female gospel singers to his usual four-piece band. "There's something about having them that takes the show into the realm of the unexpected," he says.

## Jimmy Buffett

Through November

Tickets \$29-\$226

Buffett jokingly refers to himself as a "shameless entertainer" first, a "serious songwriter" second. Both sides will be on display on his annual summer trek, which will feature his Big Eight hits ("I'm not gonna go out there and do a jazz show," he says), new songs from an upcoming disc and the early-career album cut "He Went to Paris," which Bob Dylan recently praised. "It's better to get recognized by Dylan than it is to win a Grammy," says Buffett. "As soon as I heard about it, I said, 'I'm closing the show with that song.'"

## Neko Case

Through August 9th

Tickets \$23-\$35

When Case and her five-piece band hit the road this summer, they'll bring their regular gear along with banjo, pedal steel and a combination music box and cigar box Case has dubbed the "shigby" in order to re-create the ornate folk-rock sound of 2009's *Middle Cyclone*. "We finally ironed out all the parts," says Case, adding that the sets will focus on her last two albums. Though Case's crowds have swelled this year, "it's not like they've become super-frat-boy," says the singer. "They're still eclectic."

**Case will hit theaters and festivals this summer.**



FROM TOP: DAVE HOGAN/GETTY IMAGES; KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE



## Eric Clapton and Steve Winwood

June 10th-30th

Tickets \$45-\$175

Last year, Clapton and Winwood reunited for a three-night stand at Madison Square Garden, busting out nuggets like Traffic's "Pearly Queen" and Blind Faith's "Can't Find My Way Home." Now, the duo are bringing the collaboration to the rest of America on a 14-date arena tour. The pair have worked up some new material for this outing: "I'd like to try my song 'Help Me Angel,'" says Winwood. "And last year, I was having trouble singing harmony while playing guitar on Eric's 'Pretending.' I'd like to have another go at that."

## Coldplay

May 15th-August 9th

Tickets \$35-\$110

Openers Snow Patrol, Elbow, Amadou and Mariam, Pete Dinklage

"We're going to make the set a little longer, throw in extra songs and figure out ways to reach the last row," says Coldplay bassist Guy Berryman of



Chris Martin

the band's three-month trek through mostly outdoor venues. Also, the band will be giving away copies of a new live album, *LeftRightLeftRightLeft*, at every show.

## Elvis Costello

June 9th-September 3rd

Tickets \$30-\$90

To support his new acoustic CD, *Secret, Profane & Sugar-cane* (out June 2nd), Costello is touring with a string-band ensemble he's dubbed the Sugar-canes – all top-notch bluegrass players. Costello is tailoring the gigs to match the group's sound. "We can't just play this new album – we've got to play other songs," he says, adding that the shows will also feature tunes from *King of America*. "I think people will be surprised by the energy an acoustic band can generate. It can be mellow, or it can explode."

# Tough Times, Cheap Tickets

The recession has artists and promoters offering better value and more discounts. Here's a guide to getting the most music for your money this season

The concert industry is responding to the bleak economy by slashing prices on many tours and offering fans deep discounts on multiple-ticket packages. "The economy has forced artists, managers, agents and promoters to ask, 'How do I make my show the one that the fan will spend his money on?'" says Live Nation chief executive officer of global music Jason Garner. "Price is one

way. Packaging is another." This summer, many amphitheater shows – including the Kid Rock/Lynyrd Skynyrd tour – are offering six lawn seats for \$99. Festivals like Warped and Rock the Bells are a strong value, as are the Dave Matthews Band, who keep even the best seats under \$75. "It's still a lot to pay," says Matthews. "But I'm glad that we're not gouging with \$200 tickets."

### Kid Rock, Lynyrd Skynyrd

Cheapest ticket: \$26  
June 26th-August 2nd

Just like last summer, Kid and Skynyrd are teaming up for a trip through the sheds. Unlike last time, however, the bands won't be jamming together – instead, you'll get full sets from each, including a pyro- and go-go-dancer-filled spectacle from Kid Rock. Even though he's already deep into a new CD, Kid says you shouldn't expect to hear new material: "I don't want to bore people."

### NIN, Jane's Addiction

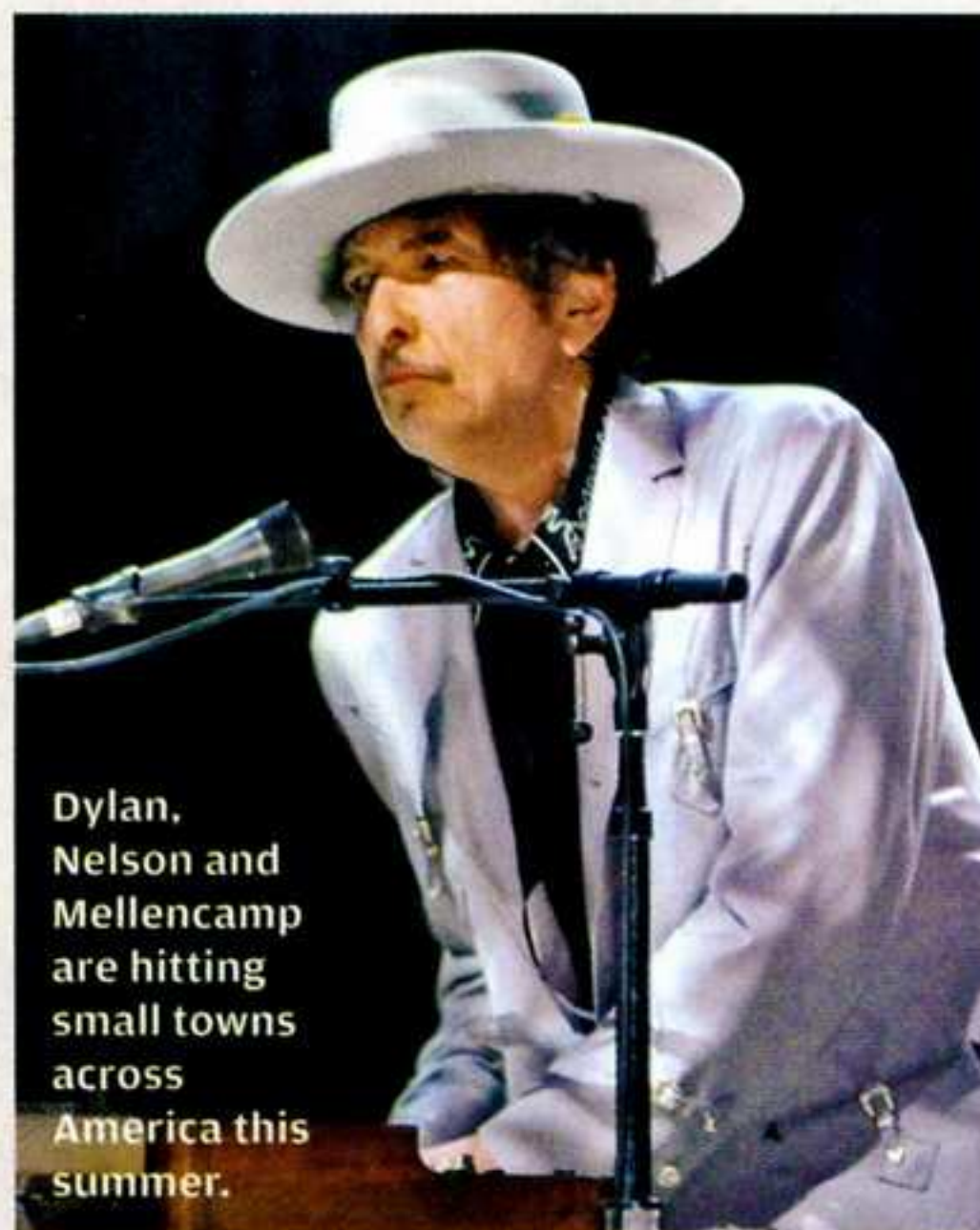
Cheapest ticket: \$20  
Through June 12th

Relive the original 1991 Lollapalooza on this tour by the Nineties giants – along with Tom Morello's new Street Sweeper Social Club project. Jane's Addiction, touring with bassist Eric Avery for the first time since 1991, will revisit their two classic albums and debut some new tunes. Says singer Perry Farrell, "Jane's got cut off before her day. I want to pick up where we left off."

### Rock the Bells

Cheapest ticket: \$30  
June 27th-Aug. 9th

Nas and Damian Marley will co-headline this traveling hip-hop festival, which hits outdoor venues in 10 cities. The lineup also features the Roots, Common, Big Boi, Talib Kweli, Busta Rhymes, a re-



Dylan, Nelson and Mellencamp are hitting small towns across America this summer.

### Bob Dylan, John Mellencamp and Willie Nelson

All tickets: \$68 July 2nd-August 15th

See three music legends in an all-American setting this summer when Dylan, Mellencamp and Nelson bring their triple bill to minor-league ballparks in small towns. "We'd figured we'd had enough of that," says Dylan, who did similar tours in 2004 and 2005 with Nelson. "But there was evidently a demand for those shows in this setting." The general-admission gigs will also be family-friendly affairs – the music will start at 5:30 p.m., and kids under 14 will get in for free if they come with an adult.

### Dave Matthews Band

Cheapest ticket: \$32 Through October 2nd

As in most years, the Dave Matthews Band will spend their summer on the road, this time debuting songs from their new album, *Big Whiskey and the GrooGrux King* (out June 2nd). The six-month tour, which includes two nights at Boston's Fenway Park, will be the first without saxophonist LeRoi Moore, who died last August. (Multi-instrumentalist Jeff Coffin will replace him onstage.) I don't think I'm ever going to get over his absence," says Matthews. "He still inspires me."



Matthews

united House of Pain and a long list of underground rappers. "These are artists that go against the grain," says Nas, who will hit the stage with Marley to preview songs from their upcoming album together. "And everybody is a fan of each other."

### Vans Warped Tour

Cheapest ticket: \$23  
June 26th-Aug. 23rd

Though the mega-fest has downsized slightly – to cut costs, there's one fewer stage this year – Warped still features about 50 acts at each show. The 15th annual trek mixes returning punk vets Bad Religion and NOFX with newcomers like electro-emo act 3OH!3 and folk rockers Meg and Dia. "We'll feel like outsiders – we're not punk or old-school," says singer-guitarist Meg Frampton. "That's why Warped is cool – it grows with the times."

### Mötley Crüe's Crüe Fest

Cheapest ticket: \$30  
July 19th-Sept. 5th

The Crüe will play *Dr. Feelgood* in its entirety on their package tour, which includes Godsmack and Drowning Pool. "We've never done some of the *Feelgood* songs – I don't remember 'Slice of Your Pie,'" says Vince Neil, who promises an encore of hits. "If we don't do 'Girls, Girls, Girls,' people will be pissed."





**RISKY BUSINESS**  
"Every tour has to be bigger, more dangerous," says Pink, who incorporates trapezes and bungee cords into her shows.

## Pink

**September 15th-TBD**

Tickets \$34-\$50

Opener The Ting Tings

The last time Pink hit U.S. stages—opening for Justin Timberlake in '07—she spun from the ceiling on silk curtains. Now, after selling out arenas around Europe and Australia, she's bringing her hit-packed, circuslike *Funhouse* spectacle—filled with acrobatic stunts, multiple costume changes and giant evil inflatable clowns—to America. "I am so freaking excited to finally show my own damn country what I do," she says.

*Funhouse* seems more like Cirque du Soleil than a typical pop show.

Every tour I'm like, "OK, it has to be more dangerous, harder to get insurance, higher, faster, bigger, better." I'm hanging upside down, spinning around 40 feet in the air, singing. I would rather sound like shit than lip-sync. I can't drink before the show, but I pretty damn well earn it after.

**Britney has her own circus-themed tour and album. A coincidence?**

I was pissed when I found out she named her album *Circus* after I named mine *Funhouse*, but what are you going to do? I'm pretty comfortable in the fact that nobody else is singing live while they're doing what we're doing.

**Does the set list ever change?**

I have to be able to change my set list. I mix in a few different covers—

"Redemption Song" by Bob Marley, Janis Joplin's "Bobby McGee," Gnarl's Barkley's "Crazy." We do "Bohemian Rhapsody." That's one that needs to be conquered.

**So this is your biggest tour ever?**

We have 80 people, 12 trucks, eight buses. There's fucking blow-up monsters and trapeze and bungees. This tour has more people because of the danger. Knock on wood, everything is fine, but I pray a lot [laughs].

**Do you rework any of your hits?**

I get so bored that I have to make a new version of "Get the Party Started" every two years. This time around, I tried to think, "If Green Day were going to cover 'Get the Party Started,' what would it sound like?" I wouldn't say we got there, but the attempt was made.

CARYN GANZ

## Elton John and Billy Joel

**Through November**

Tickets \$50-\$175

For their sixth outing together, the piano men are hitting arenas and a few stadiums this summer. At this point, they've got the routine down: The night begins with duets (often "Just the Way You Are" and "Your Song"), moves on to individual sets and wraps up three hours later with a joint take on "Piano Man." Joel is most excited about the duet portion. "Elton is a much better player than people think," he says. "We have these duels and he'll play a little run and I'll think, 'Holy shit! Where did that come from?' and I'll have to come back with something that matches that."

## Jonas Brothers

**June 20th-August 31st**

Tickets \$30-\$90

Openers Honor Society, Jordin Sparks

To top the foam hoses and pyro from last year's tour, the JoBros are upping the ante for this summer's arena romp: Think an in-the-round stage, colored lasers, a giant crane, two catwalks into the crowd and a pair of drum kits. "The drums were inspired by seeing Genesis," says Nick. "That was amazing." The Brothers will also be bringing along a horn section, to help them re-create tunes from their June release, *Lines, Vines and Trying Times*, which, according to the band, is influenced by Neil Diamond and Stevie Wonder. "It's a brand-new sound for us," says Kevin. "We're excited to see how our new songs translate onstage."

## The Killers

**August 8th-September 28th**

Tickets \$26-\$70

"We've got a few new things up our sleeve," says singer Brandon Flowers of the Killers' return to U.S. arenas in August after they spend most of the summer in Europe. Augmented by two backing musicians, the Vegas quartet are planning a 90-minute set that will feature almost all of 2008's *Day & Age*, along with a few covers—they've prepped tunes by Cyndi Lauper, Fleet Foxes and Conor Oberst—and a new arrangement of "Smile Like You Mean It" with violin and acoustic guitar. Though it's not definite yet, Flowers might be road-testing a new mirrored disco-ball outfit during "Human." "It's heavy as hell," he says. "I've already cut myself on it."

## Creed

**August 6th-October 14th**

Tickets \$30-\$85

At the end of the hard-rockers' 2002 tour, the band broke up over singer Scott Stapp's drinking. (One Chicago show was so sloppy that fans sued for a refund.) Stapp promises he's in better shape now. "At our first band meeting, I said, 'Hey, man, I'm sorry if I hurt you,'" Stapp says. Creed will debut new tunes on the reunion tour, along with their hits, all set to a "number-one, A-class" arena-rock spectacle.

## Crosby, Stills and Nash

**June 3rd-September 29th**

Tickets \$21-\$226

To mark the 40th anniversary of CSN's debut, Graham Nash says the trio will play songs from the new rarities set, *CSN Demos*. The group will also preview songs from its upcoming Rick Rubin-produced covers disc. Nash says they might play tunes by Dylan, James Taylor or Gordon Lightfoot. "Even though we didn't write them," says Nash, "they feel new to us."

## Depeche Mode

**July 24th-September 5th**

Tickets \$30-\$200

Opener Peter Bjorn and John

After two months abroad, the synth-pop vets hit U.S. arenas in July, including a two-night stand at Madison Square Garden. "The new song 'Wrong' is sounding big in rehearsals," says bassist Andrew Fletcher, who adds the trio are still whittling down the set list. "We're not the Cure," he says. "We don't play for three hours. I think Dave [Gahan] would have a heart attack from dancing for that long."



## Marilyn Manson, Slayer

July 10th-August 15th

Tickets \$12-\$99

The Antichrist Superstar and the thrash kings top the second annual Mayhem Festival, which features 13 metal acts on three stages. The headliners shared a bill once before – their fans didn't get along, but the musicians did: "We just chill out in Manson's room, listen to music and put away some absinthe," says Slayer's Kerry King.

## Metallica

September 14th-December 12th

Tickets \$50-\$76

"On this tour, for some reason, we've got this wild hair up our ass," says Metallica drummer Lars Ulrich. The band, which returns in September after spending the summer in Europe, has started spicing up its set list of classics and *Death Magnetic* tracks with obscure cover songs (Saxon's "Motorcycle Man") and its own rarities (1984's "Trapped Under Ice"). Along the way, the group is feeling more positive than ever. "There's just this giant circle of love, as we call it," says Ulrich. "Energy into the fans and energy back from the fans, and it just keeps going."

## Conor Oberst

June 17th-TBD

Tickets \$20-\$25

The biggest surprise at Oberst's summer shows will be the singer-songwriters who aren't Conor Oberst – as on his new record, *Outer South*, the singer will be trading lead vocals with his roots-rocking Mystic Valley Band. The tour includes a show at the Telluride Bluegrass Festival, a free Fourth of July gig with Jenny Lewis in Manhattan and six dates opening for Wilco. Oberst will be playing material from his solo albums, and the band has worked up covers of Paul Simon and John Prine tunes.

## Rise Against, Rancid

June 4th-July 31st

Tickets \$30-\$45

"This tour is the face of punk today," says Rise Against leader Tim McIlrath of their 32-date tour. "Rancid are the band that blazed the trail, and we're the ones carrying the torch." Being



**VICTORY LAP**  
Nathan Followill (left), with brother Caleb at Madison Square Garden

# Kings of Leon

Through September 14th

Tickets \$25-\$47

The Tennessee foursome have been huge in Europe since their 2003 debut, but it wasn't until 2008's *Only by the Night* – and the massive hit "Sex on Fire" – that they broke through at home, selling 500,000 copies and winning a Grammy. With their upcoming run through American arenas and festivals – including stops at Sasquatch and Lollapalooza – we checked in with bassist Jared Followill.

**Are the U.S. shows different on this tour?**

They've been really great, actually, much bigger than we've come to expect in America. We feel like we're in Europe. Ex-

cept they're not as drunk here. There's not as much beer being thrown around.

**Do you think a lot of the new fans only know "Sex on Fire"?**

You can definitely pick those people out in the crowd. They stand out like sore thumbs. They're usually wearing jerseys and sideways hats and stuff. But for the most part, even people who found out about us through "Sex on Fire" are going back and discovering our older stuff. We've always been about albums, not singles.

**Do you ever get weary from all the touring?**

If we had stayed at the same level we were when we first came out, we probably would've stopped making music by now, because that's hard: tiny venues, tons of

sweat, no showering afterward, no hotel room. Just getting into a van all wasted and trapped with tons of cigarette smoke. It got a little bit depressing. We're definitely renewed by playing bigger venues and kind of spoiled on the road now, playing arenas and staying in nice hotels.

**Do you guys still party as hard on the road as you used to?**

It's just different. We didn't have to worry about going out, so we would go to bars and just get wasted with the locals. But now, people recognize us, so we don't go out as much. We still probably get as drunk, but now it's just in a hotel lobby instead of some pool bar in a bad part of town.

**Are you guys getting along these days?**

Absolutely. We all have our space now, and that helps a lot. There's still that deep, underlying hatred – but no fistfights.

EVAN SERPICK

billed above the California punk vets makes McIlrath a bit nervous: "We'll have to work hard to keep their fans in the room." Rise Against's set will include raging political tunes from their last year's *Appeal to Reason*, deep cuts from their back catalog and a couple of new tracks like "Grammatizer" and "Voice of Dissent." "Those are just two-minute blasts of punk," says McIlrath. "I think the fans will appreciate it."

## Steely Dan

June 9th-September 4th

Tickets \$37-\$125

Deciding what night to catch the Dan this summer depends on which album you dig most: The band will play through three complete records – *Aja*, *Gaucho* and *The Royal Scam* – on three consecutive shows each in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Bos-

ton. (The shows will also feature a selection of hits.) On the fourth night of each stand, the group will play an all-request show – which it's calling "Takin' It to the Seats" – as voted on by ticket-holders on the Internet. "At this point, the band can play 80 percent of everything we've ever done," says Donald Fagen. Adds Walter Becker, "It will be an exercise in instant democracy. It will be fun for us, and I'll bet you people will like it too."



## Taylor Swift

Through October 10th

Tickets \$20-\$80

Openers Kellie Pickler, Gloriana

"While other girls were drawing their wedding dress, I was drawing stage dimensions," says Swift, whose 55-city tour turns her junior-high fantasies into reality: "We have giant turrets that raise during 'Love Story,' and elaborate costumes," she says. Backed by a band that includes fiddle, banjo and mandolin, Swift will also cover a Justin Timberlake track – and bust out an encore with a Nickelodeon-style twist. "Let's just say I'm going to be walking offstage drenched," she says.

## Tool

July 18th-August 8th

Tickets TBD

The prog-metal crew will take a break from working on a new album for a three-week tour built around slots at Lollapalooza, All Points West and the Mile High festival. Even though Tool won't be debuting new music, bassist Justin Chancellor says the group will "rework some old stuff and maybe throw in a few covers." Fans can also expect an intense multimedia show similar to the last tour.

## Wilco

June 12th-July 23rd

Tickets \$28-\$45

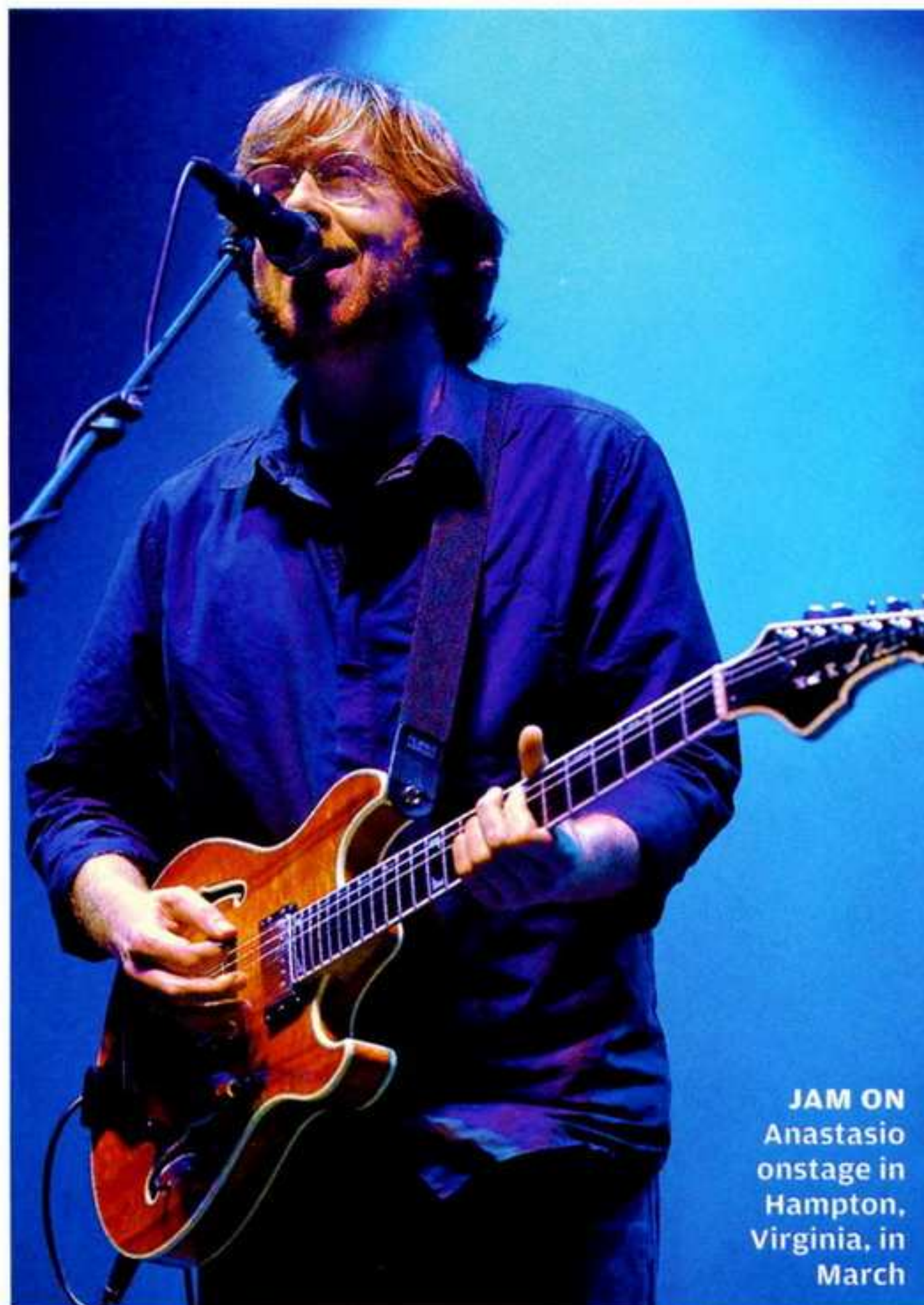
With an album due in June, the Chicago rockers will have new tunes to jam on during their tour, which touches down on festivals, theaters and ballparks. And after performing its entire catalog during a hometown residency last year, the group has also been spicing up set lists with rare tunes like "Candyfloss" and "Forget the Flowers." "We know enough songs that we don't have to repeat them every night," says drummer Glenn Kotche. "It's nice that we can just stretch out."

## Yeah Yeah Yeahs

Through July 31st

Tickets \$25-\$50

To help re-create the synth-heavy, clubby vibe of their latest CD, *It's Blitz!*, the Yeahs have enlisted David Pajo – formerly of Slint and Zwan – to play keyboards and bass on their current tour, which makes stops at All Points West and Bonnaroo. "There was an initial concern of bringing someone to help out," says singer Karen O. "But these songs require it."



JAM ON  
Anastasio  
onstage in  
Hampton,  
Virginia, in  
March

## Phish

May 31st-August 16th

Tickets \$50

"I feel incredibly close to them now," Phish guitarist Trey Anastasio said of keyboardist Page McConnell, bassist Mike Gordon and drummer Jon Fishman at the band's reunion shows in Hampton, Virginia, in March. "I knew it was the right decision to re-form before we walked out onstage, because of what was going on backstage and in the practice room." Phish are recording a new studio album and open their summer tour (including two nights at Bonnaroo) at Boston's Fenway Park on May 31st.

How does Phish sound to you now? Good? Better?

The band sounds so good to me now. One thing that happened [during the breakup] was I started listening to Phish. I got exhausted after 20-some years of playing these songs. But I became a fan of them, like "Geulah Papyrus." I heard it through the eyes of a listener, and it was so cool. When we played it [in Hampton], I was just a fan of the other three guys. I have the piano and drums loud in my monitors. The bass is loud, because I stand right next to it.

On the first night, you played a new song, "Backwards Down the Number Line," which was kind of a statement – the band is moving forward.

We played that pretty early in band practice. Fish was crying – it's pretty heavy. It's a deep, beautiful sentiment to me. There's a freshness in it, a quality of rebirth that was tangible at the shows. I know the four of us felt it.

You also played a song from one of McConnell's solo albums, "Beauty of a Broken Heart."

There are a lot of great songs from Mike's and Page's albums. Historically, we never did those. We've played solo songs from my solo career. "First Tube," "Farmhouse" and "Heavy Things" were all debuted with my solo band. I played them live, then the best ones made it over to Phish. I want to keep that. It was important to play one song from Page's record [2007's *Page McConnell*], because it's great. We were going to do one of Mike's songs – we just didn't get around to it.

The Hampton shows sounded new and natural at the same time, as if everything had changed – and nothing had changed.

That's what "Backwards Down the Number Line" is about – going backward and forward at the same time. It's just a really nice feeling. Like a circle.

DAVID FRICKE

## ALSO ON TOUR

AC/DC

July 28th-September

The Aussies' *Black Ice* tour returns for more shows – including five stadium gigs.

Bryan Adams

Through August

An acoustic solo tour of small theaters. "People yell for obscure songs every night," Adams says. "If I can remember how to play them, I will."

Leonard Cohen

Through June 2nd

Backed by a nine-piece band, Cohen plays three-hour sets on his first U.S. tour in 15 years.

The Decemberists

May 19th-August 11th

Features their entire new rock opera, *The Hazards of Love*, and a psychedelic light show.

Def Leppard, Poison, Cheap Trick

June 23rd-September 6th

Big guitars and massive hooks spanning two decades.

Fleetwood Mac

Through June 20th

The Mac are sticking to the hits. Says Lindsey Buckingham, "Not having a new album has freed us up to say, 'Hey, this represents a pretty damn good body of work.'"



Stevie Nicks

Green Day

July 3rd-August 25th

You'll get the whole new LP at some gigs – and "maybe *Kerplunk* as an encore," cracks Billie Joe Armstrong.

Bonnie Raitt, Taj Mahal

August 6th-September 25th

Three-hour gigs featuring solo sets from each artist and a bluesy jam at the end.

Keith Urban

Through December

A country-rock spectacle with five giant video screens and walkways into the crowd.

Reporting by David Browne, Michael Endelman, Nicole Frehsée, David Fricke, Caryn Ganz, Andy Greene, Brian Hiatt, Christian Hoard, Steve Knopper, Melissa Maerz, Chris Norris, Kevin O'Donnell, Austin Scaggs, Evan Serpick, Rob Sheffield, Neil Strauss



# Festivals from Coast to Coast

From bluegrass to Bruce, our picks of the seven fests worth traveling for



Conor Oberst is hitting the festival circuit this summer.

| FESTIVAL DETAILS                                                                                                | TOP ACTS                                                                                                                                                                                           | WHY YOU SHOULD GO                                                                                                                                        | OVERNIGHT OPTIONS                                                                                                                                | BEST AMENITIES                                                                                                                                                                    | THE VIP PASS                                                                                                                                  | YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Bonnaroo</b><br><b>June 11th-14th</b><br>Manchester, TN<br>\$225-\$250<br>Capacity: 80,000                   | Wilco, Bruce Springsteen, Phish, Beastie Boys, MGMT, Erykah Badu, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, NIN, Ben Harper, TV on the Radio                                                                                | Ever wanted to see 50,000 Phish fans noodle-dance to "The Wrestler"?  | Pitch a tent or park an RV on-site: free drinking water and showers. Also: Motels nearby still have rooms.                                       | Cinema tent screens films and NBA playoffs; batting cages; DJ lessons; free hair-washing and styling at a salon.                                                                  | \$1,350 buys access for two to a preshow bash, prime bleacher seats, a Bonnaroo T-shirt, and private bathrooms and showers.                   | Find an equally diverse bill at Austin City Limits (10/2-10/4), with the Beasties, Pearl Jam, DMB, Sonic Youth, Bon Iver and Lily Allen.                                                          |
| <b>Telluride Bluegrass Festival</b><br><b>June 18th-21st</b><br>Telluride, CO<br>\$60-\$185<br>Capacity: 10,000 | David Byrne, Conor Oberst, Tim O'Brien, Elvis Costello, Béla Fleck, Jenny Lewis, Emmylou Harris, Jerry Douglas Band                                                                                | The most spectacular natural setting of any American festival - you can see four mountain waterfalls from the venue.                                     | Camping available at parks in town. The nearby Inn at Lost Creek, voted one of the world's top 100 hotels, has package deals from \$214 a night. | Improvisation workshops taught by Béla Fleck; juggling tutorials; nighttime gondola rides through the mountains.                                                                  | None. "We're into the egalitarian thing," says a fest organizer. "The lawyer on your left is no different from the hippie kid on your right." | Soak in more bluegrass vibes at Hardly Strictly Bluegrass (10/2-10/4, in San Francisco).                     |
| <b>Rothbury</b><br><b>July 2nd-5th</b><br>Rothbury, MI<br>\$250<br>Capacity: 40,000                             | The Dead, Bob Dylan, Willie Nelson, the Hold Steady, the Black Crowes, Damian Marley and Nas, Girl Talk                                                                                            | The hippie-tastic bill - featuring the Dead's only summer-festival gig - guarantees the presence of goo balls and devil sticks.                          | Best to camp on-site - there are toilets, showers and a general store. If you'd rather sleep than party, hit the sober camping area.             | Yoga lessons by day; ragers in the forest - with light shows and impromptu gigs - by night.  | Packages ranging from \$490 to \$1,675. Highlights: furnished tepees with Wi-Fi and free brunch.                                              | Get your granola on at Mountain Jam (5/29-5/31, at Hunter Mountain, NY) and Gathering of the Vibes (7/23-7/26, in Bridgeport, CT).                                                                |
| <b>Rocklahoma</b><br><b>July 9th-12th</b><br>Pryor, OK<br>\$40-\$120<br>Capacity: 50,000                        | Twisted Sister, Ratt, Anthrax, Stryper, Thin Lizzy, Warrant, Skid Row, Great White, Nelson, Night Ranger, Saxon, Kix                                                                               | It's short on big reunions this year - sorry, Stryper - but this fest is still the best place to hook up with future Rock of Love contestants.           | Ample camping on-site, but if you need a pool to throw your TV into, score a room at Tulsa's Hard Rock Casino Hotel, 35 miles away.              | 72 free showers; mechanical-bull rides; an around-the-clock convenience store that sells \$6.99 six-packs.                                                                        | For \$750: meals (BBQ ribs and a nacho bar), access to an air-conditioned tent with flatscreens and all-you-can-drink beer.                   | You can get an early start headbanging to Bon Jovi and Judas Priest at Summerfest (6/25-7/5, in Milwaukee).  |
| <b>All Points West</b><br><b>July 31st-Aug. 2nd</b><br>Jersey City, NJ<br>\$89-\$199<br>Capacity: 30,000        | Beastie Boys, My Bloody Valentine, Fleet Foxes, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Tool, Coldplay, Vampire Weekend, the National  | The lineup's an Anglophile's dream, with the only U.S. summer-fest gigs by MBV, Coldplay, and Echo and the Bunnymen.                                     | There's no camping. Look on Craigslist for cheap rooms or crash on a pal's couch.                                                                | Boat ride to festival offers awesome views of New York skyline and Statue of Liberty.        | Pay \$439 a day for an exclusive ferry from Manhattan, front-row viewing, catered grub and access to a "private garden" with a cash bar.      | If you're partial to New York: River to River (June-August) stages free shows with sweet views. See Conor Oberst and Jenny Lewis on 7/4.                                                          |
| <b>Lollapalooza</b><br><b>August 7th-9th</b><br>Chicago<br>\$190<br>Capacity: 75,000                            | The Killers, Tool, Depeche Mode, Jane's Addiction, Kings of Leon, Beastie Boys, Of Montreal, Snoop Dogg, Band of Horses, Lou Reed                                                                  | Amazing diversity: rock icons (Lou Reed), New Wave superstars (Depeche Mode) and a gazillion indie buzz bands (Bon Iver, No Age).                        | Nearby hotels - the Hard Rock, the Ritz-Carlton, the Four Seasons and the James - offer ticket-and-room deals starting at \$775 for two.         | "Our DJ area is really cool," says Lolla's promoter. "It's a surround-sound dome under the trees." Groove to sets by Diplo and Kid Cudi.                                          | Free food, beer and spa services - cucumber-water foot baths - all for \$850. For \$30K-\$60K, get a private cabana and your own bartender.   | Dig summer in the city? Try other urban parties like the Montreal Jazz Fest (6/30-7/12) and Bumbershoot (9/5-9/7, in Seattle).                                                                    |
| <b>Outside Lands</b><br><b>August 28th-30th</b><br>San Francisco<br>\$226<br>Capacity: 60,000                   | Pearl Jam, Dave Matthews Band, Beastie Boys, Black Eyed Peas, M.I.A., Mastodon, Modest Mouse, the Mars Volta                                                                                       | See Pearl Jam in one of the country's most stunning urban parks.      | No camping in Golden Gate Park, but the Hotel Triton has a Jerry Garcia suite; rates start at \$150 per night.                                   | The Winehaven tent, where locavores can sample cheese, charcuterie and oysters.              | \$595 hooks up entry to a private lounge, shaded areas and back massages - plus exclusive toilets.                                            | Other scenic sites: Sasquatch (5/23-5/25, in Quincy, WA) and the Mile High Music Festival (7/18-7/19, near Denver).                                                                               |



"New Orleans is the most musical city. It's in the celebration and the suffering." —Dave Matthews

# Random Notes



## SWEEP THE LEG, JOHNNY!

While karate kid John Mayer kickboxed with his personal sensei in L.A., Amy Winehouse roundhoused invisible demons in St. Lucia

**HELLA CROWDED**  
After opening their reunion tour in Atlantic City, No Doubt's Gwen Stefani waded through a sea of amateur paparazzi at an afterparty.

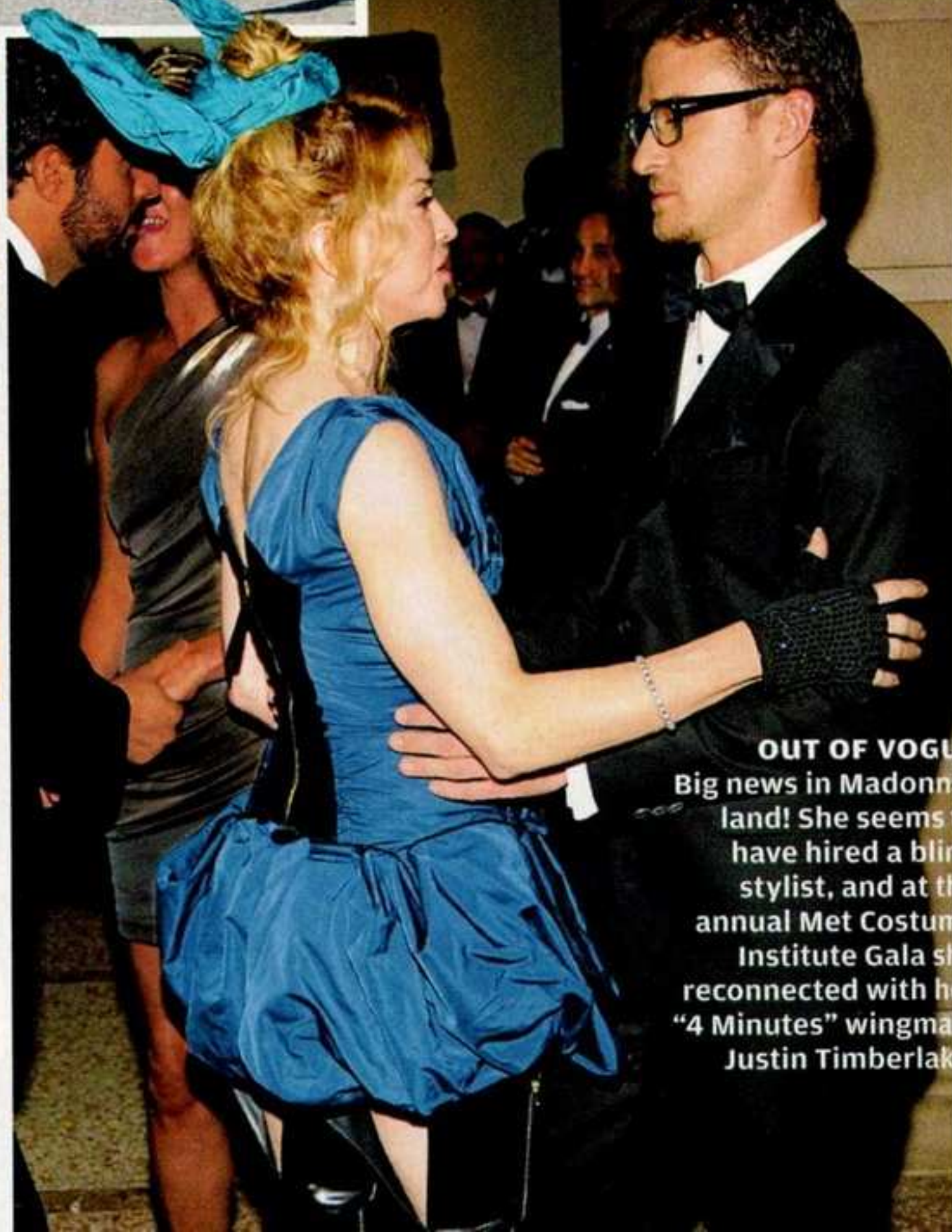
**BIG BALLERS**  
Kobe Bryant's rap career was an abject failure. (Remember "Thug Poet"? Ha!) But the MVP still got props from Jay-Z and Puff Daddy at a Lakers playoff game.



Wentz, budding mixologist

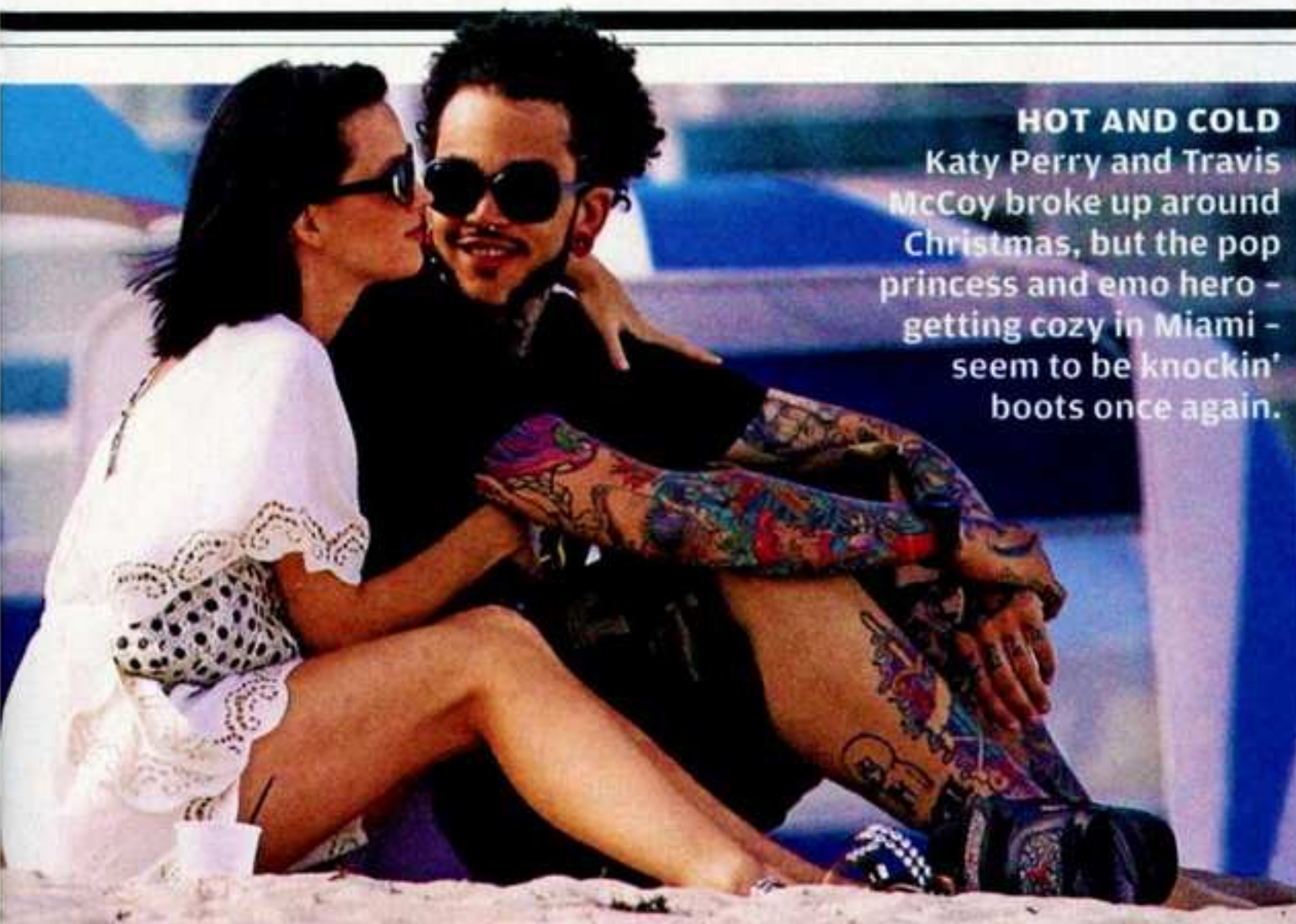
## The Boy Behind the Bar

Pete Wentz is not a good bartender. "I can flip a bottle and do sexy moves, but I just don't know how to pour the drinks," he says. "People start ordering *Sex and the City* apple martinis, and I just throw them some Jäger bombs." But for the second anniversary of his East Village dive bar, Angels & Kings, the Fall Out Boy bassist rolled up his sleeves and mixed drinks for friends and family. Fans were dying to get in — Wentz had announced the invite-only bash on his Twitter. "My manager said, 'You realize you just invited 300,000 people to a private party?'"



**OUT OF VOGUE**  
Big news in Madonna-land! She seems to have hired a blind stylist, and at the annual Met Costume Institute Gala she reconnected with her "4 Minutes" wingman Justin Timberlake





**HOT AND COLD**  
Katy Perry and Travis McCoy broke up around Christmas, but the pop princess and emo hero – getting cozy in Miami – seem to be knockin' boots once again.



**MAMMA M.I.A.**  
M.I.A. and fiancé Benjamin Bronfman tote their ridiculously good-looking baby boy, Ikhyd, through LAX.

# Big Easy Bash

The 2009 New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival brought more than 400,000 music fans – the highest attendance since Katrina – to the Crescent City for seven days of music and muffulettas. Wilco, Dave Matthews Band and Spoon were there, as well as local legends like Allen Toussaint and the Neville Brothers. Neil Young unleashed an 18-minute “Down by the River,” and Erykah Badu unveiled her VW-size ‘fro. “New Orleans is the richest city in America,” said Bonnie Raitt. “Everyone is thrilled to be here.”

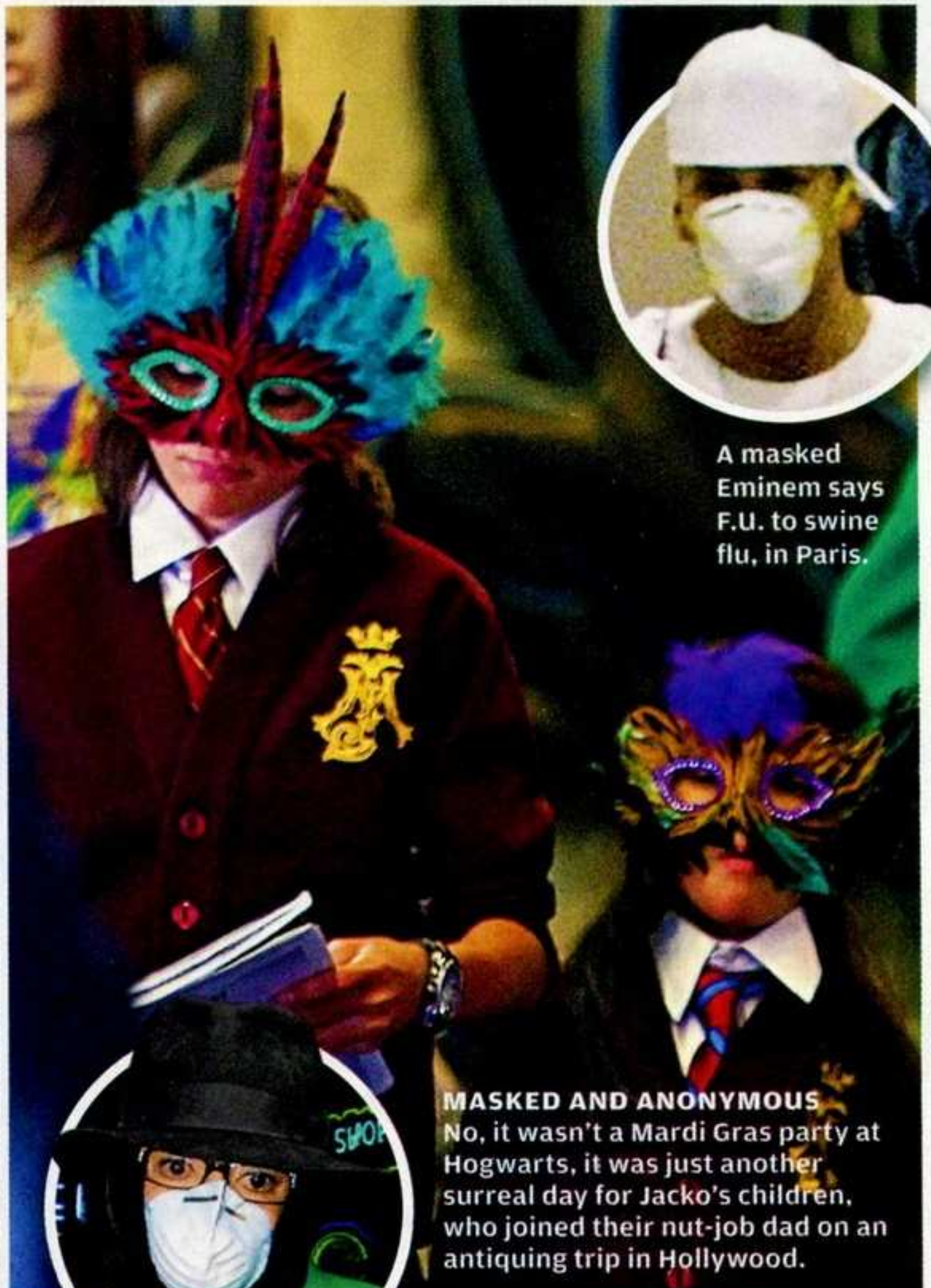


Badu getting down; Young chilling out.



# The Prez and the Producer

“X-Men is big, and Transformers is about to come out, but those are all fictional characters,” says Black Eyed Pea Will.i.am. “In real life, there are only a couple of superheroes, and Bill Clinton is one of them cats.” The two Willies hooked up at an L.A. fundraiser for Clinton’s Millennium Network, which brings together young leaders and philanthropists. “It’s people like him that inspire me to give,” says the rapper-activist, who recently ponied up a solid chunk of change to help send needy kids to college. “I’m trying to get a hero gig. That was my demo.”

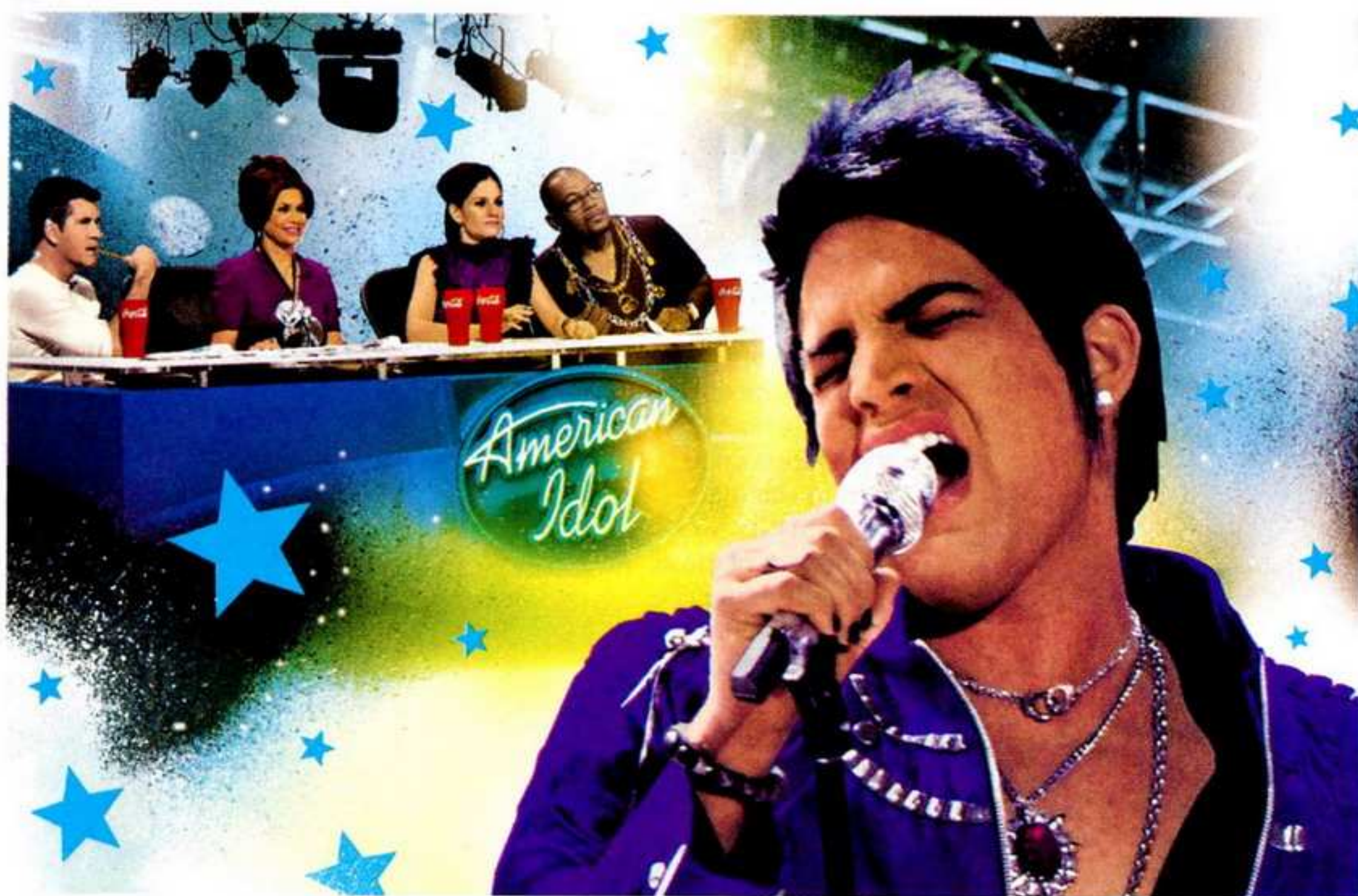


A masked Eminem says F.U. to swine flu, in Paris.

**MASKED AND ANONYMOUS**  
No, it wasn't a Mardi Gras party at Hogwarts, it was just another surreal day for Jacko's children, who joined their nut-job dad on an antiquing trip in Hollywood.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PICHICI-GARCES/SPLASH NEWS; CHARLIE VARLEY/SIPA PRESS; RICK DIAMOND/GETTY IMAGES; INFPHOTO; ZODIAC/FAPIAN/SPLASH NEWS; LONDON ENTERTAINMENT/SPLASH NEWS; DANNY MOLOSHOK/REUTERS; NATIONAL PHOTO GROUP





# Whole Lotta Lambert

By flaunting his flamboyant glam-rock sex-god persona, Adam Lambert single-handedly saved 'American Idol' By Rob Sheffield

**A**ERICAN IDOL" IS back on top, and it's all one little black-leather-clad demon prince's fault. For the past few seasons, *Idol* seemed to be dying of boredom, but Adam Lambert, a goth studlet with mascara, black nail polish and a falsetto from deep in the larynx of Lucifer, has single-handedly rescued the franchise. He can do sincerity and ridiculousness all at once, exactly the algorithm *Idol* has been striving for all these years. Lambert combines the different *Idol* archetypes, delivering the complete

## American Idol

Tuesdays, 8 p.m., Fox

star thrill heretofore doled out one sliver at a time. He has the burning "say my name, bitch" thing of Chris Daughtry, the cutthroat vanity of a Carrie Underwood, but also that innocent desire to give pleasure à la Kelly Clarkson. He packs a whole *Gong Show* of Americana into one pair of striped spandex tights.

Where the hell did they find this guy? There's a "boy who fell to Earth" quality about him, like David Bowie's Lady Star-

dust come to life. It's a little hard to believe that, until a few months ago, he was toiling away as an obscure understudy in the L.A. production of *Wicked*. He's easily the most *fun* *Idol* ever, a flam-bam-boyantly queeny California boy who has devoted his nights to making Midwestern housewives slobber into their tubs of Ben & Jerry's Karamel Sutra. Whether he's slutting up a rocker like "Born to Be Wild" ("wiii-eeee-iiyaaaaiild!") or sobbing his way through "Mad World," he oozes pure awesome-stosterone.

Having Adam around seems to cheer everybody up, including the other singers, who know the pressure's off. Hell, even Simon looks happy. Yeah, it's supposed to be a competition, but part of Glambert's charm is that by removing all the bogus suspense from the show, he's made it watchable again.

We don't know for sure if Glambert is gay – all he says is he has nothing to hide or deny – but if not, it's the gayest embodiment of flaming youth by a straight guy since Bowie sold the world. Glambert plays off the new gay stereotype that has been reality TV's gift to our culture: the hyperfunctional

gay dude who has his shit together in contrast to all the neurotic, insecure straight guys around him. He reverses the joke from *Mean Girls* – he's too gay *not* to function. Somewhere along the line, this has become an iconic gay image in the mainstream – seen more recently in

## THE WATCH LIST

### Glee

Tuesday, May 19th, 9 p.m., Fox

This dramedy about a high school glee club does for show-tune kids what *Friday Night Lights* did for jocks. Can these songbirds learn to listen to their hearts? Can the football star admit he yearns to sing? Can you keep your lunch down when they bust out cuts from *Oliver!*? Yes, yes and don't be too sure.

### The Real Housewives of New Jersey

Tuesdays, 10 p.m., Bravo

How'd this reality juggernaut take so long to hit the Garden State? These five women are the franchise's finest skank bouquet, especially Teresa, who confides, "I wanna get breast implants, but my husband's more of an ass guy." And that only hints at how awesome this show is. R.S.

*I Love You, Man*, where the only person with any confidence is the gay Andy Samberg character, who gets to be strong while all the straight boys are sulky little bitches.

Glambert doesn't seem dragged down at all by the neediness or self-doubt that eats up the kids trapped in the *Idol* closet. Clay Aiken went through a five-year struggle to come out, but in 2009, Adam's flamboyance shows that he knows exactly what he's doing. He rocks his fingerless black gloves and his lesbian wallet chain (how riot-grrrl is he?) and doesn't seem the least bit nervous about being who he is – he's like a younger, sluttier Tim Gunn.

You know how your basic glam-rock epic ends with the hero dying because he's too beautiful for this cruel world? Adam has left this fatalistic aspect of glam rock behind; he's picked Bowie, Queen and Roxy Music clean in terms of stylistic cues, but he's not content to be a beautiful loser – he wants to be a beautiful winner.

Part of the story of American pop has always been straight kids trying to act as cool as gay kids, but Adam takes the story a step further. Ever see that clip of Secretariat at the 1973 Belmont Stakes, where he's running 25 lengths ahead of the other horses, but he's still all "Wheeee! Fast is fun! More, please!" That's the joy Glambert shows when he sings, doing that Elvis upper-lip curl as a hint that something cosmically freaky is about to happen.

He hit historic heights the other night when he took the hammer of the eyeliner gods to "Whole Lotta Love," trampling it underfoot and vowing to give us every inch of his love, except the extra inch he was saving for "Slow Ride" with his little-sis figure Allison Iraheta, who gushed that Glambert took her to his hairstylist. (Awww!)

He's not competing with the other singers – he's just curious about how far he can push this, so instead of dialing it down a notch, he keeps getting freakier. Give this man the word "wild," "burns" or "feelin'," and he will hand it back to you full of puncture wounds. Thanks to him, this mad world is getting a lot madder every week. 





# The GOP Jihad

Leaderless and adrift, far-right Republican purists are trying to purge the party of its last remaining moderates

★ By Tim Dickinson ★

**A**RLEN SPECTER DIDN'T JUMP ship. He was forced to walk the plank.

On Tax Day, in a move timed to coincide with the nationwide tea-bag protests, outgoing Club for Growth president Pat Toomey announced that he would mount a primary challenge to Specter, a Senate veteran from Pennsylvania best known for securing Clarence Thomas' confirmation to the Supreme Court. His goal wasn't to take Specter's seat for himself; according to top GOP observers, the far-right Toomey had no real chance of winning in a state that saw 200,000 Republicans register as Democrats in the last election. The true objective was to knock Specter – an old-school centrist whom Toomey's rabidly small-government Club had named its "Comrade of the Month" for his vote backing the president's stimulus plan – out of the Republican Party.

The plan worked – though not as expected. On April 29th, Specter side-stepped Toomey's challenge by defecting

to the Democratic Party, a move that could give the president a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate. Explaining the breakup, Specter denounced the end of the "Reagan Big Tent" that had ushered him into office in 1980. Given the GOP's far-right radicalization, he said, he could no longer cater to the embittered dregs of the party he had served for decades: "I was unwilling to subject my 29-year record in the Senate to the Pennsylvania Republican primary electorate." In other words, he told Republicans, it's not me – it's *you*.

As Specter's forced march down the gangplank makes clear, the GOP is in the midst of a reactionary spasm – one that threatens to marginalize the party for a generation to come. Rather than acknowledging the party's failed policies and reaching out to new constituencies, the GOP's dominant faction is retrenching around the anti-government, free-market, fundamentalist strain of Republicanism last championed by Barry Goldwater – who steered the party to one of its most

crushing defeats in 1964. The purists are led by a group of GOP veterans who tried to bring down Bill Clinton in 1994 – including Contract With America architect Newt Gingrich, former House majority leader Dick Armey and anti-tax crusader Grover Norquist. The veterans are allied with House Minority Whip Eric Cantor, a Gingrich protégé who has emerged as the youthful face of the Party of No, as well as with stimulus-rejecting Gov. Mark Sanford of South Carolina and right-wing radio heavy Rush Limbaugh, who enforces the new GOP orthodoxy from the most feared bully pulpit in America. Together, they seek not to expand the party but to purge it.

Indeed, the Republican jihad has reached such a fever pitch that, to these ideologues, excommunicating one of the party's most powerful senators and handing the president a potentially unstoppable majority actually marks a positive development for the GOP. In an interview with *ROLLING STONE*, Sanford cheered Specter's departure, calling him "deadly for the



Republican brand." Firing up his listeners, Limbaugh hailed the defection for "weed-ing out people who aren't really Republi-cans," adding that he only regretted Spec-ter didn't take John McCain with him.

Moderates in the party were appalled by the loss of Specter – but seem power-less to stop the ideological cleansing. Sen. Olympia Snowe – the Senate's last moder-ate Republican, along with Susan Collins of Maine – rebuked the purists for betraying the Republican coalition. "I believe in the traditional tenets of the Republican Party: strong national defense, fiscal responsibil-ity, individual opportunity," Snowe said. "I haven't abandoned those principles. The Republican Party has abandoned those principles." Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina went even further. "We are not los-ing blue states and shrinking as a party be-cause we are not conservative enough," he said. "If we pursue a party that has no place for someone who agrees with me 70 percent of the time, that is based on an ideological purity test rather than a coalition test, then we are going to keep losing."

**T**HE PURGE COMES AS THE Republicans find themselves in their deepest electoral hole since the 1960s. With the elec-tion of Barack Obama, the party suffered its worst presidential defeat in 44 years. Since 2006, the GOP has lost 51 seats in the House and another 15 in the Senate – and there's no sign that the Republicans have hit bottom yet.

Obama's victory was not simply a repu-diation of failed conservative governance – it was a reflection of a fundamental elec-toral shift that threatens the GOP's long-term viability. White working-class vot-ers are disappearing fast – their share of the electorate has plunged by 15 percent-age points since Reagan left office. One in four voters are now racial minorities, and Hispanics, the fastest-growing bloc of new voters, broke for Obama two to one. Even more striking, nearly 70 percent of young voters from the millennial generation cast their ballots for Obama – and their ranks are swelling by 4.5 million every year.

"Our coalition is shrinking," McCain campaign manager Steve Schmidt warned in a speech to Log Cabin Republicans in April, "and losing ground with segments of the population that are growing." In ad-dition to the GOP's "alarming" inability to capture young voters, Schmidt said, the rise of Hispanic voters "could soon cost Republicans the entire Southwest. It's very hard to see how we put together 270 elec-toral votes without the Southwest."

A look at the national map reveals that the GOP risks becoming hemmed in to the northern Rocky Mountains. According to a recent Gallup analysis based on more than 350,000 poll results, Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents enjoy a

majority of five points or more in 35 states. Only five states tilt to the GOP: Alaska, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming and Nebraska. This is an epic shift from 2002, when a majority of states leaned Republican. "You can't be noncompetitive in vast regions of the country and have any hope of gover-nance," says Tom Davis, who led the GOP to victory in 2002 as head of the National Republican Congressional Committee.

According to recent CNN polls, Re-publicans are less popular than the gov-ernments of leftist Venezuela and com-munist China. Even legalizing marijuana has a bigger electoral constituency than the modern GOP. "The Republican Party has not coalesced around anyone, and it has not coalesced around any ideas," says Frank Luntz, a top Republican pollster and strategist. "And you've got the best communicator ever in modern politics as the leader of the Democratic Party. It is the perfect storm against the GOP."

Against the seismic shifts in the elector-al map, the GOP's move to purge its few re-

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**"The choice for voters becomes either the hard left or the Reagan worldview. I think the Reagan worldview will win by a surprising margin."**

**Newt Gingrich**

Former House speaker

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maining moderates strikes even the archi-tects of the Reagan Revolution as insane. "The party's in dismal shape mainly be-cause it doesn't know how much trouble it's in," says Bruce Bartlett, a top Reagan deputy who crafted the president's sweep-ing 1981 tax cuts. "They delude themselves that 'We'll come back in 2010, just like we did in 1994.' But the underlying funda-mentals are vastly worse: Moderates have completely left the party. All you're left with is the hard core. And there's nobody in a position of authority in the party will-ing to say that some of the beliefs of the core are just *crazy*."

Indeed, the current Republican purge threatens to take the party even further to the right than George W. Bush did in 2000. The genius of Karl Rove was his ability to offset the dwindling ranks of Reagan Democrats with a brand of "com-passionate conservatism" that drew soccer moms, seniors and Hispanics into the Re-publican tent. In the process, Rove broke with "small-government" tenets of hard-

line conservatives. He delivered on tax cuts for the rich – but he also carved into historically Democratic turf by expanding public education and Medicare, paying for both with deficit spending.

It is against this legacy of GOP largesse that the Contract With America veter-ans – along with ideological allies like the Club for Growth – are now waging jihad. As Gingrich sees it, Republicans lost last year not because Bush's disas-trous policies were too conservative, but because they weren't conservative *enough*. Freed from what he considers a "failed Republican leadership," Gingrich says, true conservatives can now fight what he has taken to calling the "Bush-Obama big-spending program."

"The choice for voters becomes either the hard left or the Reagan worldview," Gingrich tells *ROLLING STONE*. "I think the Reagan worldview will win by a sur-prising margin."

**W**HILE GINGRICH AND the GOP's party purgers cloak themselves in the mantle of Reagan, their project actually holds more in common with the legacy of Goldwater. "This ro-mance with purity has a history to it," says Rick Perlstein, author of *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus*. "What's happening today to the Republican movement is a re-turn to form."

In 1964, Goldwater won the GOP presi-dential nomination by rallying a hardcore base of small-government activists still fu-rious over the New Deal. Despite suffer-ing the worst defeat in modern Republi-can history – Goldwater garnered a mere 38 percent of the vote – hard-liners be-came convinced that the failed campaign purified the party, laying the groundwork for the Reagan Revolution. "It's a romance with defeat," says Perlstein. "It's not a po-sition that a party that aims to govern a great nation can take. They'd rather be rigid than right."

But listen to those leading the current purge, and they will assure you that victory is just around the corner. Their frame of reference is not 1964, but the Gingrich rev-olution three decades later. "Obama has ir-ritated and poked all of the moving parts of what caused 1994," says Norquist, pres-ident of far-right Americans for Tax Re-form. Pointing to the success of the recent tea parties, Norquist insists that the GOP is on the verge of retaking Congress. "I'm optimistic we could take back the House," he says. "I'm planning on winning, and ev-erything's in line to do that."

The key, Norquist says, is the forma-tion of what he calls a "leave us alone" co-alition – one that mirrors Goldwater's band of disaffected libertarians who op-pose almost all government on principle.



Norquist ticks off the coalition's component parts and their demands. "Taxpayers: Leave my money alone. Businessmen: Leave my business alone. Gun owners: Leave my guns alone. Parents: Leave my kids alone. Religious right: Leave my faith and my kids alone."

Gingrich is counting on this coalition to turn on Obama, whom he believes is engaged in a "maniacal effort to alienate virtually everybody in America." In a nod toward the rumors that he will run for president in 2012, Gingrich adds, "My only point is: If the Democrats want to alienate them, I'll be glad to gather them up."

More immediately, mobilizing a mob of leave-us-aloners has enabled Gingrich and other Contract With America veterans to reassert their power in the rudderless GOP. The driving forces behind the tea parties were American Solutions, a pressure group run by Gingrich, and FreedomWorks, an outfit directed by former House majority leader Dick Armey. Together, they provided logistics, talking points and "tool kits" to the protesters, even deploying organizers to take over lackluster parties. The effort turned out more than 300,000 furious right-wing protesters into the streets of 800 cities nationwide.

The protests, Armey says, should serve as a blunt warning to Republicans: "If I want to hold my office, I better make these people happy." But given the mix of crazies and dead-enders who showed up at the tea parties – secessionists, self-appointed border militia, Ron Paul "revolutionaries" and kooks who question Obama's citizenship – the protests succeeded only in showcasing the party's most politically ineffective fringe. "We're moving to a conservatism that's a form of cultural dissent," says David Frum, the former Bush speechwriter who helped coin the phrase "Axis

of Evil." "It's becoming a way for people to vent feelings of alienation and anger. It's not a way to organize people into a group that can become a majority, that can win an election and exercise political power in an effective way."

Even the issue supposedly at the heart of the tea parties – higher taxes for ordinary Americans – was itself a falsehood. In an interview with Armey, I ask how he could honestly crusade against Obama for raising taxes when the president has in fact lowered them massively. Armey's response was jaw-dropping.

ARMEY: Where was the massive tax cut?

RS: In the stimulus bill.

ARMEY: There was no tax cut in the Obama plan.

RS: I'm sorry?

ARMEY [To an aide]: Did I miss a tax cut in the Obama stimulus package?

AIDE: There was a mild one. A very, very mild one.

ARMEY: Well, my guy tells me there were apparently some modest tax cuts in there. But my guess is that it was an income-redistributional tax cut.

RS: Correct me if I'm wrong, sir, but it was the largest tax cut in history – even bigger than Bush's.

ARMEY: I'd have to look at that. Maybe I've been unkind and unfair in having missed that.

"It's just partisan horseshit," says Bartlett, the former Reagan deputy. "There were no tea parties protesting the stuff that Bush did that increased the deficit. Nobody said a goddamn word then, because it was the Republicans who were doing it. When our side does it, it's OK. When the other side does exactly the same thing, it's socialism. The party needs a deep rethink of its basic political philoso-

phy. But right now it's all pandering to the base and throwing red meat to crazy people. Whatever you think about the policies they're proposing, there's not the slightest possibility that it will ever put them back into power."

ON CAPITOL HILL, THE MAN charged with enforcing the GOP hard line is House Minority Whip Eric Cantor. "He's a real small-government conservative," gushes Armey. Like his political mentors, Cantor is trying to capitalize on the backlash over the bank bailouts. Such faux populism is nothing new for Cantor. His most substantive achievement as a member of the House was preserving a loophole that taxes the massive profits of hedge-fund partners at only 15 percent, instead of the customary 35 percent – a boondoggle for billionaires that Cantor baldly tried to pass off as a victory for "bluejean-wearing Americans."

At the beginning of Obama's term, House Minority Leader John Boehner had tried to strike a collaborative tone with the new president. "Our job is not to be the Party of No," he said. "We need to be willing to put our solutions out there. And if we're not willing to put our better solution out there, then we ought to reconsider the position we're taking."

But in Cantor's worldview, the federal government isn't in the solutions business. "I don't think we came to Washington to fix everybody's problems," he has said. Consulting with Gingrich and Armey on a regular basis, Cantor has bypassed Boehner and returned the House to a far more hard-line approach. Whipping his caucus into line, he marshaled every Republican in the House to reject Obama's stimulus plan and budget. "Cantor is the whip for

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ROBERT GALBRAITH/REUTERS/LANDOV; NEWS/COM; GETTY IMAGES; ISTOCK PHOTO: JONATHAN LIM YONG HIAN; ISTOCK PHOTO: RON SACHS/NEWS/COM; EVAN AGOSTINI/AP IMAGES; FEMA; FIAT; ALL-PRO PHOTO: PAUL SANCYA/AP IMAGES

# THREAT ASSESSMENT

## THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE SCARY

Maine governor signs bill legalizing gay marriage.

Pirates attack cruise ship.

Congress switches its 99-year-old power plant from coal to natural gas.

Obama goes after offshore tax shelters.

Fourth-grader Misha Lerner asks Condi Rice about torture.

Levi slams Bristol's abstinence message: "It's not realistic."

Miss USA hopeful, promoting green initiatives, wears only vintage clothes.

Schwarzenegger calls for large-scale study on legalizing marijuana.

Fiat agrees to help bail out Chrysler.

Sen. Arlen Specter defects.

FEMA pulls scary coloring book for kids.

Pete Seeger turns 90.

WITH US

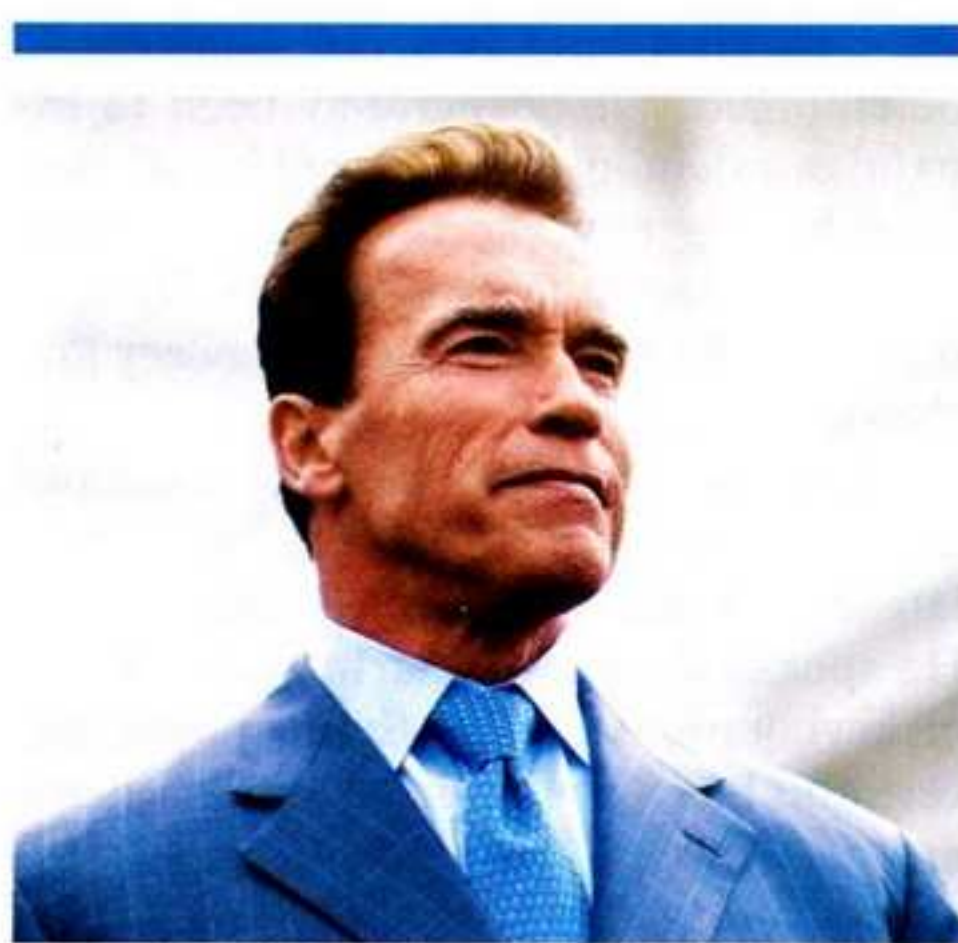


the Party of No," says Larry Sabato, a political scientist at the University of Virginia. "They're banking on the idea that Obama will fail. But if his term is crowned with success, they'll be in even deeper trouble than they were in 2008."

Judging from the early returns, the "just say no" strategy formulated by Cantor and Gingrich is failing miserably. Despite the bruising fight over the stimulus, 70 percent of Americans approve of Obama's handling of the economy, and 65 percent believe the GOP isn't doing enough to cooperate with him to get the American economy back on track. "If you take a look at the numbers," says Davis, the former NRCC chair, "Republicans aren't gaining anything."

That hasn't stopped the GOP's radicals from punishing anyone who dares to propose a more moderate direction. Consider the recent dust-up between Rush Limbaugh and Michael Steele, the new chairman of the Republican National Committee. Nothing seemed to indicate that real change was coming to the GOP more than the ascension of an African-American to chair the RNC. Steele vowed to reverse the party's descent into regionalism and electoral irrelevance. "We're going to bring this party to every corner, every boardroom, every neighborhood, every community," he pledged. The party, he insisted, needed to adopt a less hostile tone on immigration, leave gay marriage up to the states and reject Limbaugh's oft-quoted desire to see President Obama "fail."

"Rush Limbaugh is an entertainer," Steele said on CNN, attempting to put the radio host's comments into perspective. "Yes, it's incendiary. Yes, it's ugly." But worry not, he added: Michael Steele, not Limbaugh, is the "de facto leader of the Republican Party."



"Next year is a political year. This year it's all about rebuilding America. We should all be able to meet in the middle. That's where the action is."

**Arnold Schwarzenegger**  
Governor of California

The retribution for Steele's heresy was swift. Taking to the air, Limbaugh eviscerated his own party's chairman, accusing the RNC leader of being "obsessed with seeing to it that President Obama succeeds." Facing the wrath of Rush's listeners, as well as a rebellion by party donors, Steele immediately caved in, apologizing for being "inarticulate" and professing his "enormous respect" for Limbaugh. "There

was no attempt on my part to diminish his voice or his leadership," Steele groveled.

But the apology wasn't enough for the hard-liners. In an unprecedented move, the RNC's governing body gutted Steele's authority over the budget, and rumors have circulated that he could be subjected to a no-confidence vote. Says one Republican insider, "He'll be lucky to hold on to his job."

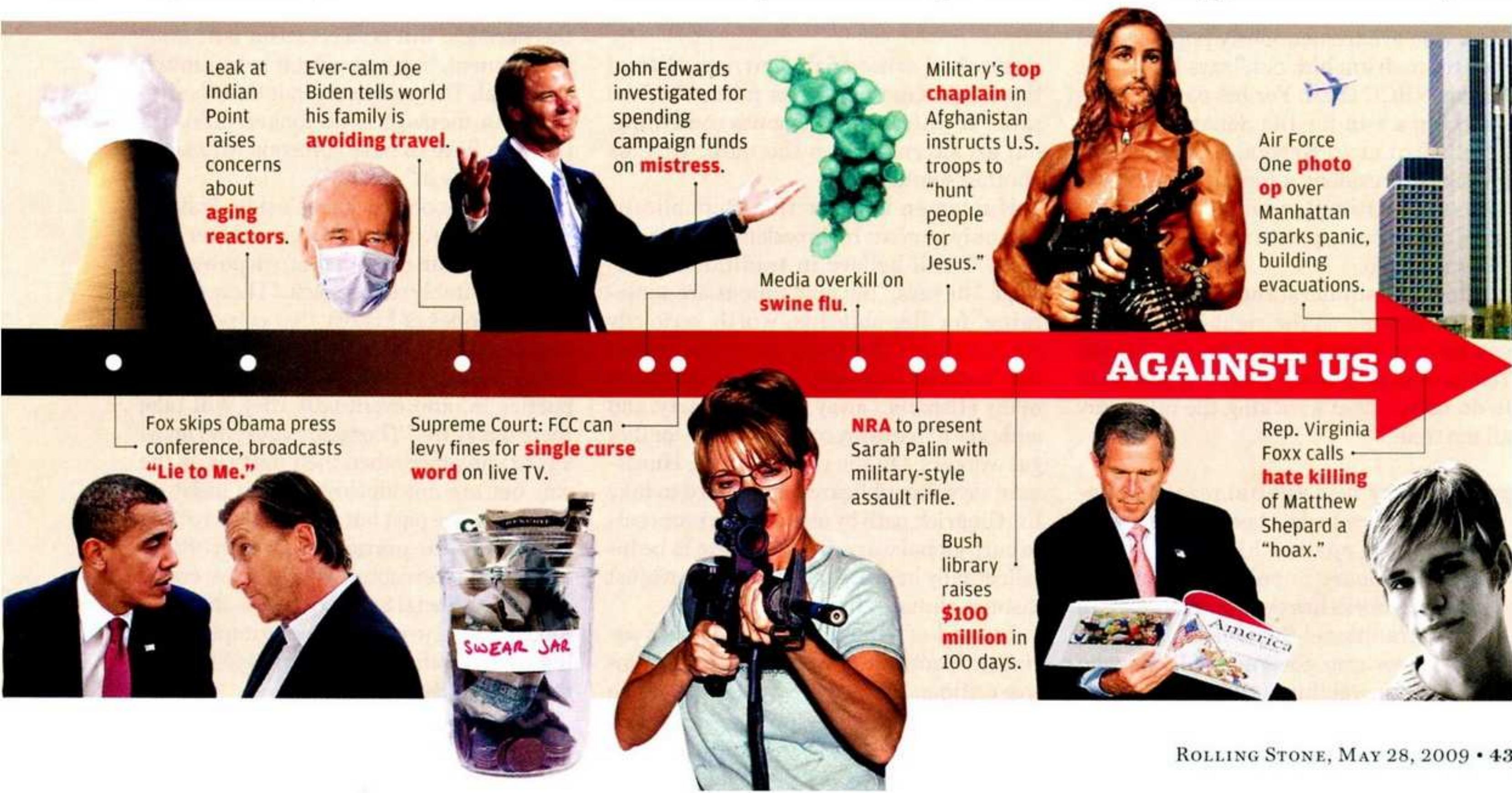
**S**TEELE IS NOT THE ONLY REPUBLICAN facing expulsion for the sin of moderation. In recent months, hard-liners have worked to cast out two of the party's most popular governors as heretics.

In the good old days – before Obama – many leading Republicans considered Arnold Schwarzenegger the future of the party. During the GOP primary debate at the Reagan Library, his mix of fiscal conservatism, social tolerance and climate-saving environmentalism sparked a lively discussion about whether the Constitution should be amended to allow the immigrant Schwarzenegger to run for president. But despite having loyally stumped for McCain, Schwarzenegger has now been written off by archconservatives. Says Norquist, "He's certainly not a model for Republican success. Or success of any kind."

Rumors recently circulated that Schwarzenegger has been contemplating a Specter-like switch of his own, debating the merits of abandoning the GOP with his advisers. "I think that the party needs to change," he tells *ROLLING STONE*, commenting on the rumors for the first time. "But there's no discussion that I've ever had with anybody about leaving the party. So that doesn't exist, this conversation."

Nevertheless, since Obama took office, Schwarzenegger has worked closely with

TOP: WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES; BOTTOM, CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT: ISTOCK PHOTO; NO CREDIT; MARK WILSON/GETTY IMAGES; C.S. GOLDSMITH AND A. BALUSH/CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL; EVERETT COLLECTION; DIGITALLY ALTERED BY "ROLLING STONE"; JASON MCCLANE/AP IMAGES; GINA VAN HOOF/TIM SLOAN/AP/GETTY IMAGES; PVT. CHRISTOPHER T. GRAMMER/DOD; SACHA LECCA; MIKE YANISH/FOX; PETE SOUZA/THE WHITE HOUSE





the White House on auto emissions, green energy and the stimulus package. He calls the president "a great visionary" and castigates fellow governors, like Mark Sanford of South Carolina, who tried to refuse stimulus funding for their states. "That's not really representing the people," Schwarzenegger says, calling on Republicans to stop hoping for Obama to fail and start working to make America succeed.

"This is not a political year," he says. "Next year is a political year where everybody looks for winning seats in the Senate and the House, all those kind of things. This year it's all about rebuilding America. If we're successful with that, that means that America's back! And we are booming. So, I mean, there is no downside."

The real risk, Schwarzenegger warns, is for Republicans who stake out a more extreme position. "They will be suffering the consequences," he says. "Because this is not going to be good for the country or good for the party. People shouldn't get stuck in ideological corners. We should all be able to meet in the middle – on health care, on high-speed rail, on greenhouse-gas reductions. That's where the action is."

Another GOP governor facing excommunication is Charlie Crist of Florida. By all reasonable standards, Crist is a right-of-center Republican who has established crossover appeal by taking a conservationist approach to global warming and the Everglades. But to GOP hard-liners, Crist is nothing but a warmed-over Democrat, a turncoat who appeared with Obama in support of the stimulus package. The governor was recently pilloried by GOP operatives – with obvious sexual innuendo – as "batting for the other team." Even Jeb Bush's son, George P., got into the act, giving Crist the hip-hop handle "D-Light."

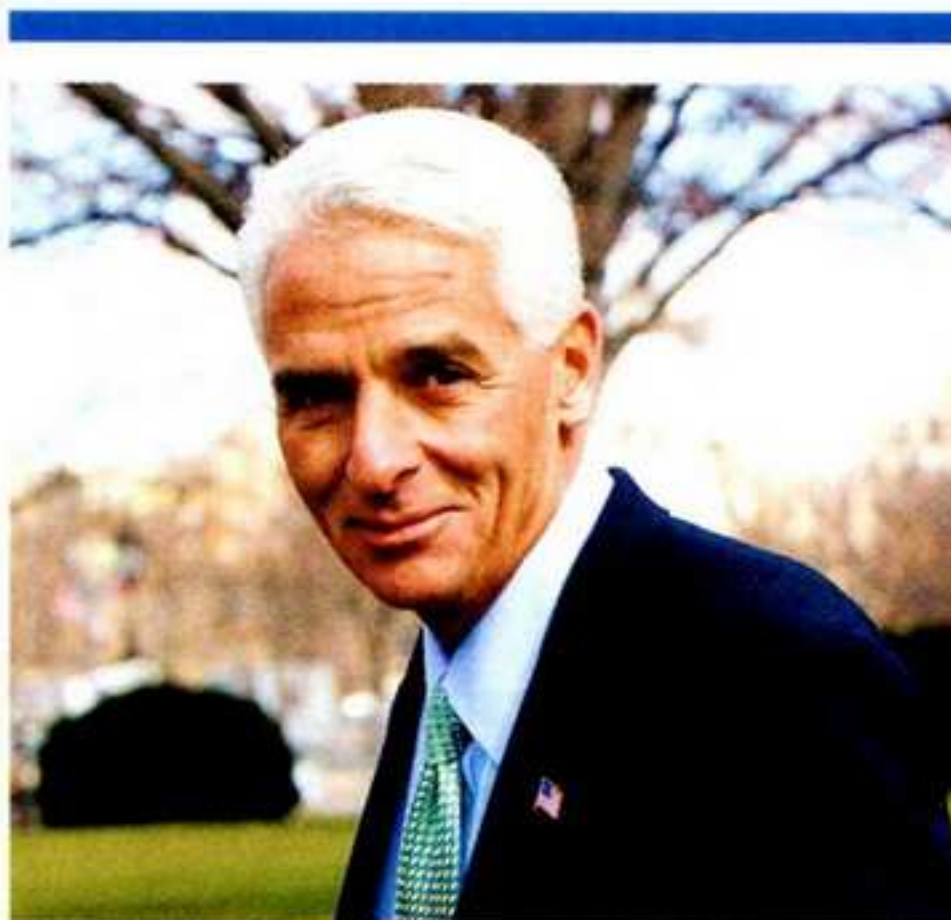
Many Republican strategists see such tactics as self-defeating. "You get guys like Crist who are tremendously popular, and they try to drum him out," says Davis, the former NRCC chair. For his part, Crist is weighing a run for the Senate – where, he tells *ROLLING STONE*, he would have given the president a fourth Republican vote on the stimulus bill. The GOP, he adds, must come up with something to say other than No.

"Don't misunderstand me," he says. "Sometimes 'no' is the right answer. But you have to have a vision for the future. You have to talk about what it is you want to do rather than knocking the other guy all the time."

**T**HE ONE REPUBLICAN GOVERNOR who has been able to speak out against his party's reactionary impulses without facing the pitchforks has been Jon Huntsman Jr. "I'm a traditional Republican," says the popular two-term governor of Utah, who is said to be weighing a 2012 presiden-

tial run. "But our philosophy has got to be changed. We desperately need to expand our demographic appeal by offering hard-hitting, realistic, thoughtful proposals that address the issues that really matter to people, like health care, energy and the economy."

Huntsman, an heir to a multibillion-dollar chemical fortune, is a handsome, late-end boomer with Gen-X sensibilities. He speaks fluent Mandarin, has guested on keyboards at an REO Speedwagon concert and has a young man's love of motocross. Although his record as a conservative is largely unimpeachable, he's an



**"Sometimes 'no' is the right answer. But you have to have a vision of the future, rather than knocking the other guy all the time."**

**Charlie Crist**  
Governor of Florida

unabashed critic of the current state of the GOP. "Our party has fallen flat," he says. "If you're gonna dismiss something, put an alternative on the table. Give us another solution."

Huntsman believes that Republicans can only survive by broadening their appeal. "I still believe in traditional marriage," he says, "but civil unions are something, for Republicans, worth seriously considering." The party must also reject the "nativist" rhetoric that has driven so many Hispanics away from the party, and embrace a "pathway to citizenship" for illegal workers. On the environment, Huntsman says, Republicans can't afford to take the Gingrich path by obstructing proposals to curb global warming. "We have to be intellectually honest," he says. "We can't just dismiss climate change as bunk."

Instead of demonizing Obama as a socialist, Huntsman favors a more substantive critique. "There are a lot of pieces to

the foreign-policy puzzle that have been left out so far," he says. "Our most important relationship in the world is China. There's nothing going on there right now. And what about trade? I haven't heard a thing about our trade agenda – it's been a complete blackout."

But such comments underscore a deeper reality: In the end, the Republican Party may be damned no matter what direction it chooses. If it follows Limbaugh and Gingrich and demonizes Obama, it could permanently alienate millions of voters. If it embraces large parts of the president's agenda, as Schwarzenegger suggests, it could wind up with no credit for Obama's success. And if it tries to develop the kind of alternative, solutions-oriented message favored by Huntsman, it could wind up stuck with wonky, eye-glazing electoral duds, like China and trade.

There is an alternate tack, embodied by the once and likely future presidential candidate Mike Huckabee. The former governor and Baptist preacher from Arkansas is seeking to hold together the old Reagan coalition by quietly deepening the party's commitment to Christian social values while attracting moderates with a more upbeat brand of economic populism. Like Gingrich, Huckabee is seeking to run against both the Bush and Obama administrations. But instead of going after the size of government, he is focusing more on whose interests it serves. Both parties, he argues, have been "captured by a Wall-Street-to-Washington axis of power," one that is "oblivious" to the problems of everyday Americans. As a result, Huckabee vehemently dismisses the GOP hard-liners who want government to sit by and do nothing during the financial crisis.

"My contention is that they are really libertarian," he says. "The Dick Armeys of the world preach that folks like me are the heretics. But conservatism isn't anti-government. You just want it to be limited and local. The problem is not that the Republican message is no longer valid. It's that you have to have someone who actually presents it."

History is on Huckabee's side. Politics, like business, goes in cycles: After one party enjoys an extended run in power, the other inevitably surges back. "There are inexorable tides of history that come in and out, and there's almost no way you can fight them," says Huntsman. "They bring some parties in, and eventually they will take them out again." The candidates who manage to win office when their party is on the way out are not ideologues who insist on hewing to the past but pragmatists willing to adapt to the prevailing currents. Richard Nixon interrupted a progressive era by expanding Social Security, just as Bill Clinton split the two Bush eras by implementing welfare reform and other objectives of the Reagan Revolution.



The best strategy for Republicans may be to agree with Obama about the need for action on issues like health care and energy – and then win over those pissed by the actions Obama takes. “As you clean this stuff up, you start polarizing and making enemies,” says Davis, the former NRCC chairman. “That’s the coalition. The Republicans, if they’re poised, can pick part of that up and make some gains back.”

Unfortunately for the GOP, Davis says, the only cure for the party’s romance with ideological purity is the agony of defeat. “What traditionally happens in these cases is that the party gets tired of losing,” he says. “And when you get tired of losing, you make adjustments. It’s not an easy fix. There will be blood all over the floor in some of these primaries along the route.”

If Republicans don’t adjust quickly, the losing may go on for years. With the GOP having lost so many state legislative seats in the last two elections, the Democrats will have the upper hand in drawing up new voting districts next year. “As bad as it looks now,” says Luntz, the GOP strategist, “it could get a lot worse after redistricting. Democrats will be in the driver’s seat for the first time since 1970 – and that will make it impossible for the Republicans to recapture the House until at least 2022.”

Mark McKinnon, the strategist who spearheaded George W. Bush’s ad campaigns in 2000 and 2004, puts it even more bluntly. “Darwin’s thinking holds true for political parties,” he says. “Adapt or die. Or at least be in the minority indefinitely.”

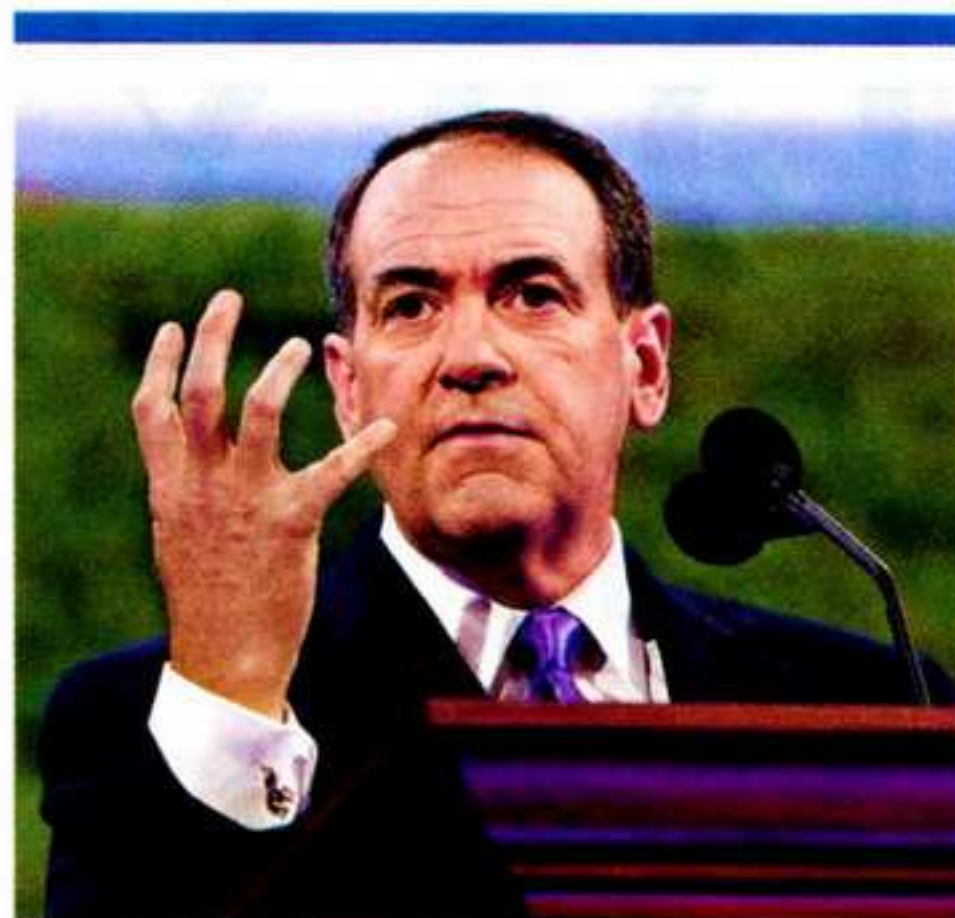
**W**HEN I ARRIVE AT THE governor’s residence in Columbia, South Carolina – a lavishly appointed antebellum mansion spared by Sherman’s army – Mark Sanford has just sat down with his family to a Sunday meatloaf supper. In recent weeks, the governor has emerged as his party’s fastest-rising star, and he is widely touted as a conservative standard-bearer in 2012. A lanky man dressed in jeans and a blue gingham shirt, Sanford greets me with a grin and insists that I shake hands around the table with each of his four adolescent boys.

Sanford has elevated his national profile by threatening to reject \$700 million in stimulus funds for schools and other essential services – even though his state suffers the nation’s third-worst level of unemployment. Although he ended up accepting the money, Sanford is now threatening to veto the state budget unless South Carolina lawmakers offset the federal windfall this year by setting aside an equivalent amount in state funds to pay down debt. If he succeeds, as many as 4,700 state employees will lose their jobs.

The standoff has made Sanford a hero to the tea-party set, and earned him ful-

some praise from Rush Limbaugh. He also receives high marks from the Contract With America vets, who recall the three terms he served in Congress as a member of the Gingrich revolution. “I didn’t have to have very many conversations with Mark Sanford before I said, ‘This guy really understands economics,’” Armey says. “He’s devoted to individual liberty and small government. He’s probably the brightest rising star among our governors.”

The hard-line stance has also made Sanford a lightning rod for criticism. Even some in his own party accuse him of advancing his political career at the expense



**“The problem is not that the Republican message is no longer valid. It’s that you have to have somebody who actually presents it.”**

**Mike Huckabee**

Former governor of Arkansas

of his constituents. “I like Sanford, don’t get me wrong,” says Bartlett, the Reagan deputy. “But he’s not standing up for any goddamn principle. He’s thinking about running for president in 2012 and about what he can do to make himself attractive to the kind of people who make up the universe of Republican primary voters.”

From his past rhetorical bombshells – Sanford has compared Obama’s economic policies to those of Stalinist Russia – I expect the governor to be a firebrand. But as we sit under dark oil paintings in the mansion’s library, where his butler serves chocolate cake, Sanford delivers his conservative, fiercely ideological critique with the mild manner of an economics geek. The stimulus standoff, he tells me, has given him unique leverage to force deep cuts to a state government that he views as bloated and inefficient. And he has no trouble with his rejectionist stance reinforcing the GOP’s reputation as the Party of No. “The

fact is that somebody has to start saying ‘no,’ because we’re on an unsustainable course,” he says. “‘No’ can be a badge of courage. As conservatives, it is frustrating to find yourselves constantly in the role of blocking, stopping, tackling, impeding, but that is a legitimate check on the natural progression of things – which is for government to grow and liberty to yield.”

For Sanford, smaller government is everything. Although he’s a conservative Christian fond of citing Scripture, even Sanford’s opposition to gay marriage boils down to an argument against deficit spending. “I wouldn’t approach gay marriage on a moral basis,” he says. “I’d be driven to the issue based on its economic cost.” In Sanford’s novel, if bizarre, formulation, the government is already spending money it doesn’t have to provide tax breaks to heterosexual couples. “If governments can’t afford the current level of promises,” he says, “tell me how we can substantially expand the pool of beneficiaries for a system that’s already bankrupt?”

In the “tug of war” for the future of the party, Sanford insists the GOP must retreat to its small-government core – which means rejecting the past eight years of Republican rule. “We talked about being the party of less government and lower taxes,” he says. “What got us in trouble was saying one thing and doing another.” If that means driving moderates out of the party, so be it.

“I love heavy equipment,” Sanford explains. “John Deere makes a great tractor. But when they get into trouble in the marketplace, they don’t say, ‘We’ve kind of lost our way. Let’s take our engineering capacity and start to produce boats and airplanes, and by broadening our tent, we can make our way through the wilderness.’ No, no. They go back to making a better tractor, and that’s the way out of the wilderness. We have to go back to the basics. What will get us out of the wilderness will be acting on what we say we’re about.”

Sanford is, in the parlance of politics, a beautiful loser. Like Goldwater before him, he’s a candidate of unwavering devotion to ultraconservative ideals, which makes him an electoral nonstarter. Even Sanford seems aware of the limited appeal of his “tough shit” message at a moment of grave economic distress. “There’s not a particular appetite for austerity in austere times,” he says. “But if that’s what you believe, if that is where you’re coming from, you need to let it out and you need to make the case for why, in fact, that approach is better than the next guy’s.”

I ask Sanford if the retreat to that core – at a time when Americans are looking for, if not a handout, at least a hand up – threatens to relegate the GOP to political irrelevance for the foreseeable future.

“I suppose it does,” he says simply. “And I can live with that.”



# GREEN DAY FIGHTS

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“EVERY SONG, EVERY WORD, EVERYTHING I WRITE, EVERY PART OF the music – I completely throw myself into it,” Billie Joe Armstrong says, sitting in a soft chair in the downstairs den of his home. Green Day’s singer-guitarist and main songwriter lives in a neighborhood perched on a hill east of downtown Oakland. A sliding glass door opens to a patio with an enviable view of San Francisco Bay, all the way to the Golden Gate Bridge.

BY DAVID FRICKE ✦ PHOTOGRAPHS BY SAM JONES





**ROAD WARRIOR**

"I've deprived myself for the past three years," says Armstrong, who hasn't toured with Green Day since 2005. "I get onstage and I'm totally happy. This is where I belong."



But Armstrong is facing the other way as he speaks. And his gaze wanders up the cherry-red wall across the room, to large framed photographs of the Who's Pete Townshend smashing a guitar in the mid-Sixties and a trio of very young Beatles – John Lennon, George Harrison and original bassist Stuart Sutcliffe – in Hamburg, Germany. “That is the thing that can fuck you up in the head,” Armstrong goes on at a machine-gun clip. “Here’s this thing, this freedom of rock & roll. I have the opportunity to express myself for the rest of my life, which is awesome. At the same time, I’m doing it as if my life depended on it.”

“That’s the thing for me,” says the guitarist, 37, whose eternal-punk-boy features and modish haircut ensure he doesn’t look a day over 22, his age when Green Day’s 1994 album, *Dookie*, made them overnight punk-pop stars, selling 15 million copies worldwide. “I have to make sure that I’m completely lost in the moment.”

This is what he means: The night before, Green Day – Armstrong, bassist Mike Dirnt and drummer Tré Cool – play at Oakland’s Fox Theater. The gig is one of

weirdly sweet harmonies lacing “Christian’s Inferno” and “Murder City,” and Cool drives everything like Keith Moon with Charlie Watts’ swing.

Armstrong, who wrote virtually every note and word of *21st Century Breakdown*, is the nonstop center of the maelstrom – all through a second set too, including hits from *Dookie* and the politically charged 2004 smash, *American Idiot*. And he pays for it. After the show, in a catering room backstage, dozens of friends and relatives cluster around Dirnt and Cool with congratulations. Armstrong, though, is a no-show. He stays in his dressing room, recovering.

“He must be exhausted,” says his mother, Ollie, a petite woman in her 70s with curly blond hair, a warm smile and, at the moment, a fretful-mom’s sigh in her voice. Billie is the youngest of her six children; their father, Andy, died of cancer when Billie was 10. “I worry about him,” she says of Billie. “He puts so much of himself into his music, into performing. It takes a lot out of him.” Later, Billie gets a text message from his sister Anna, who also wait-

with me or Mike or his wife, Adrienne, at the same time. You can talk to him – ‘OK, what do you think of this?’ – and he’ll be looking you in the eye, going, ‘Huh?’”

Dirnt, 37, uses a similar metaphor: “Billie is not able to turn off the six different radio stations in his head.” The two met in fifth grade, at a school in Crockett, California, north of Oakland – Armstrong is from nearby Rodeo; Dirnt was born in Oakland – and have played music together for nearly as long. They started Green Day, originally called Sweet Children, when they were 15. (Dirnt’s real name is Michael Ryan Pritchard. A friend dubbed him Dirnt after the sound of his bass-playing.)

“We are a democracy with an elected leader,” Dirnt says of Green Day. He and Cool, whose real name is Frank Edwin Wright III, “are there to support Billie. Because he drives himself insane. We tell him, ‘We’re here for you, man. We do not take lightly what you’re doing.’”

At home, says Armstrong, “I catch myself apologizing a lot.” He pauses, grinning. “Not a lot,” he quickly amends. “Enough.” For a guy who freely admits he wants to be “the rock god from hell,” Armstrong strives for a normal family life. He and Adrienne – who co-owns an organic clothing and furniture store, Atomic Garden, in Oakland – have been married since 1994 and have two sons. Asked about his writing regimen for the new album, Armstrong says the first thing he did every day was “get up and see the kids off to school.” In baseball season, he is an assistant Little League coach.

Still, Armstrong concedes, “I will come to Adrienne once in a while and go, ‘I know I’ve been completely consumed and self-centered. I’m sorry that for the last 15 years all I’ve talked about is being in a rock band.’”

“Billie *is* music,” claims Dirnt. (He and Cool also have two children apiece.) “If you took the music away from Billie, you would still have a good husband and father who takes care of business and is there for his kids.”

“But the rest,” he says, “would be a shell.”

ON THE WAY DOWNSTAIRS to the den, Armstrong points out some musical highlights in his home: on one wall, a framed print of Bob Dylan’s painting on the cover of his 1970 album *Self Portrait*; on another, a photograph of the members of Green Day and U2 re-enacting the cover of the Beatles’ *Abbey Road*, taken when the bands made a benefit single together at the London studio in 2006; and around a corner from the den, Armstrong’s home studio. At one point, as he worked here on songs for *21st Century Breakdown*, Armstrong recorded a cover of the Who’s 1966 mini-opera “A Quick One While He’s Away,” singing and playing all of the parts.

## “GROUND ZERO FOR ME IS STILL PUNK ROCK,” says Armstrong. “I get something uplifting out of painting an ugly picture. It’s just my DNA.”

four surprise Bay Area shows to limber up for their first world tour since 2005 (they start in Seattle on July 3rd), and the two-and-a-half-hour marathon begins with a complete performance of the band’s new rock opera, *21st Century Breakdown*. The album is a compound bomb of classic-rock ecstasy, no-mercy punk assault and pop-song wiles; it’s like the Clash’s *London Calling*, the Who’s *Quadrophenia* and Hüsker Dü’s *Zen Arcade* all compressed into 18 songs.

From the start, Armstrong is way gone. In “21st Century Breakdown,” he holds his guitar aloft like Bruce Springsteen and swings his power-chord arm in Townshend-style windmills. He pogo to the goose-step beat of “Know Your Enemy,” punches the air during “East Jesus Nowhere” like he’s boxing with God and leans over the lip of the stage for “Horseshoes and Handgrenades,” belting the line “I’m not fucking around!” eye to eye with the kids in the pit. Dirnt is a key voice in the

ed for him backstage: “You have to make sure you take care of yourself.” (“I was like, ‘I’m good,’” he assured her.)

Butch Vig, who produced *21st Century Breakdown* with Green Day, recognizes that kind of total immersion: He co-produced Nirvana’s 1991 album *Nevermind*. “I saw the same thing in Kurt,” Vig says, referring to singer-guitarist Kurt Cobain. “When he played, it was like he was free. And Billie Joe has told me that: ‘When I’m onstage, I’m free. I’m not thinking.’”

Vig saw the downside of that intensity too. “They’d be working on a song, it wasn’t coming together, and Billie would get frustrated. He’d put his guitar down and say, ‘I’m going home’” – sometimes leaving Dirnt and Cool standing there. “Billie sets the bar high. He expects everybody to get there as quickly as he does. But Mike and Tré keep up with him. When they lock in, they play like no other band I’ve worked with.”

Cool, 36, describes Armstrong as “gifted and tormented. Billie’s brain is like 18 tape recorders playing simultaneously in a circle. Then he tries to have a conversation

Senior writer DAVID FRICKE wrote the Bruce Springsteen cover story in RS 1071.





**TOO COOL**

Tré didn't quite fit into Green Day at first. "Billie and Mike had a Paul McCartney-and-John Lennon thing going," he says. "Now, I think Billie is Paul and John."



"That song is one of the most perfect moments in rock theater, more inspiring than *Tommy*," he raves. And he can't get enough of it. Green Day have cut a full-band version, available as an iTunes bonus track with *21st Century Breakdown*. At the Fox Theater, they performed the entire piece at a soundcheck.

"It's important to us that we're still looked at as a punk band," says Cool, who joined Green Day in 1991. He has his first drum kit, the one he played as the 12-year-old drummer in the Lookouts, set up in an attic room of his Oakland home. "It was our religion, our higher education." Armstrong's first favorite bands included Hüsker Dü and the Bay Area ska-punk group Operation Ivy. He fondly remembers his sister Anna taking him to see the Replacements when he was 15.

But recently, Cool says, Armstrong has "gone archival. He's looking for the architects of rock & roll, like Eddie Cochran. He's like, 'I've got this great obscure Creation record.'" While recording with Vig in Los Angeles last year, Green Day bought cheap turntables at Amoeba Records and

something new," Armstrong says. "That is just as frightening as the past."

But embedded in the howitzer riffing and shout-along choruses is the most personal, emotionally convulsive record Armstrong has ever written. References come from close to home, like "the Class of '13" in "21st Century Breakdown" – Armstrong's older son, Joseph, 14, graduates from high school in 2013. Dirnt is certain the guitarist wrote "Last of the American Girls" about Adrienne: "She has very strong beliefs and stands up for the things she believes in." Armstrong starts the title song with his own birthday – "Born into Nixon, I was raised in hell" (he was born in 1972). When he sings about abandonment and vengeance in songs like "Before the Lobotomy," "Christian's Inferno" and "Peacemaker," he does it in the first person. "You'd be surprised what I endure," Armstrong croons in the Seventies-John Lennon ballad section of "Restless Heart Syndrome," before the psychotic wah-wah guitar blows in.

"I don't really know what I was setting out to do," Armstrong confesses. For

"East Jesus Nowhere," a scalding rebuke of fundamentalist religion, after attending a church service where a friend's baby was baptized. The friend later asked him, "Was it really that bad?"

Dirnt says Armstrong, who dropped out of high school in 12th grade, always wrote with "seriousness, on a personal-politics level. 'Basket Case' [on *Dookie*] is about someone trying to hold on to sanity."

Cool recalls the way his dad, a Marine helicopter pilot during the Vietnam War, reacted to Armstrong's rendering of a father's absence in *American Idiot*'s "Wake Me When September Ends": "He was really moved. Because that's what happened to my mom and him. They got married, she got pregnant and he got shipped off to Vietnam. That love story was his."

Armstrong talks frankly about the roots of his discontent, like the "years of disconnection" in his family after his father died. "The problem was I had five parents: my older brothers and sisters" – Alan, Marcie, Holly, Anna and David. "They were going through their own loss. Yet they had this responsibility toward me – my mom had to work graveyard shifts as a waitress. The resentment grew. And I didn't want to be a burden. I wanted to be a younger brother. It's taken us a lot of years to get through that."

"But we're all born with the same demons," he argues. "I'll see a kid at a show wearing a Green Day T-shirt and think, 'I wonder what's wrong with him. What's he going through?' There is always that part of you, on the subterranean side of society. You don't fit. You see things, and they make you angry. I internalize shit. And I spit it out."

"Ground zero for me is still punk rock," Armstrong says heatedly. "I like painting an ugly picture. I get something uplifting out of singing some of the most horrifying shit you can sing about." He smiles. "It's just my DNA."

Armstrong beams when asked if Joseph has finally heard the new album. "I had just got the mastering back, then had to split town," he says. "Adrienne said it was so funny – Joey and his friend in the car, headbanging the whole time. Sometimes I feel insecure – I want to make sure 'Christian's Inferno' isn't going on in this house. I don't think he understands everything that's going on in there. He just knows it rocks hard."

"But in the next few years," Armstrong acknowledges with a slight shiver, "he's definitely going to do some investigating."

## "I'VE BEEN CONSUMED," says Armstrong. "I tell my wife, 'Sorry that for the last 15 years all I've talked about is being in a rock band.'"

lots of vinyl to play during breaks. Vig would arrive at the studio to work on guitar parts and find Armstrong spinning Eighties power-pop LPs by the Beat and the Plimsouls.

"Everyone's gotta get their inspiration from somewhere," Armstrong says. He talks excitedly about his research for *21st Century Breakdown*, the records and artists he listened to on the way to his own songs: the Pretty Things' 1968 concept album, *S.F. Sorrow*; Ray Davies of the Kinks ("I love how he can make everyday life sound so grandiose"); the Doors' first two albums; Meat Loaf's *Bat Out of Hell* ("Just because it's so ambitious").

"For me, it's the whole aesthetic: harmonies, dynamics, swagger, fluidity," Armstrong continues. To make your own rock & roll history, he contends, "you take all of those ingredients and establish them to your own life, your past."

*21st Century Breakdown* is, like the anti-Bush vitriol of *American Idiot*, fiction set in current events: A punk-rock couple, Christian and Gloria, spin their wheels and fight their way through a new century already going terribly wrong. "We're in a transition, from one destructive era to

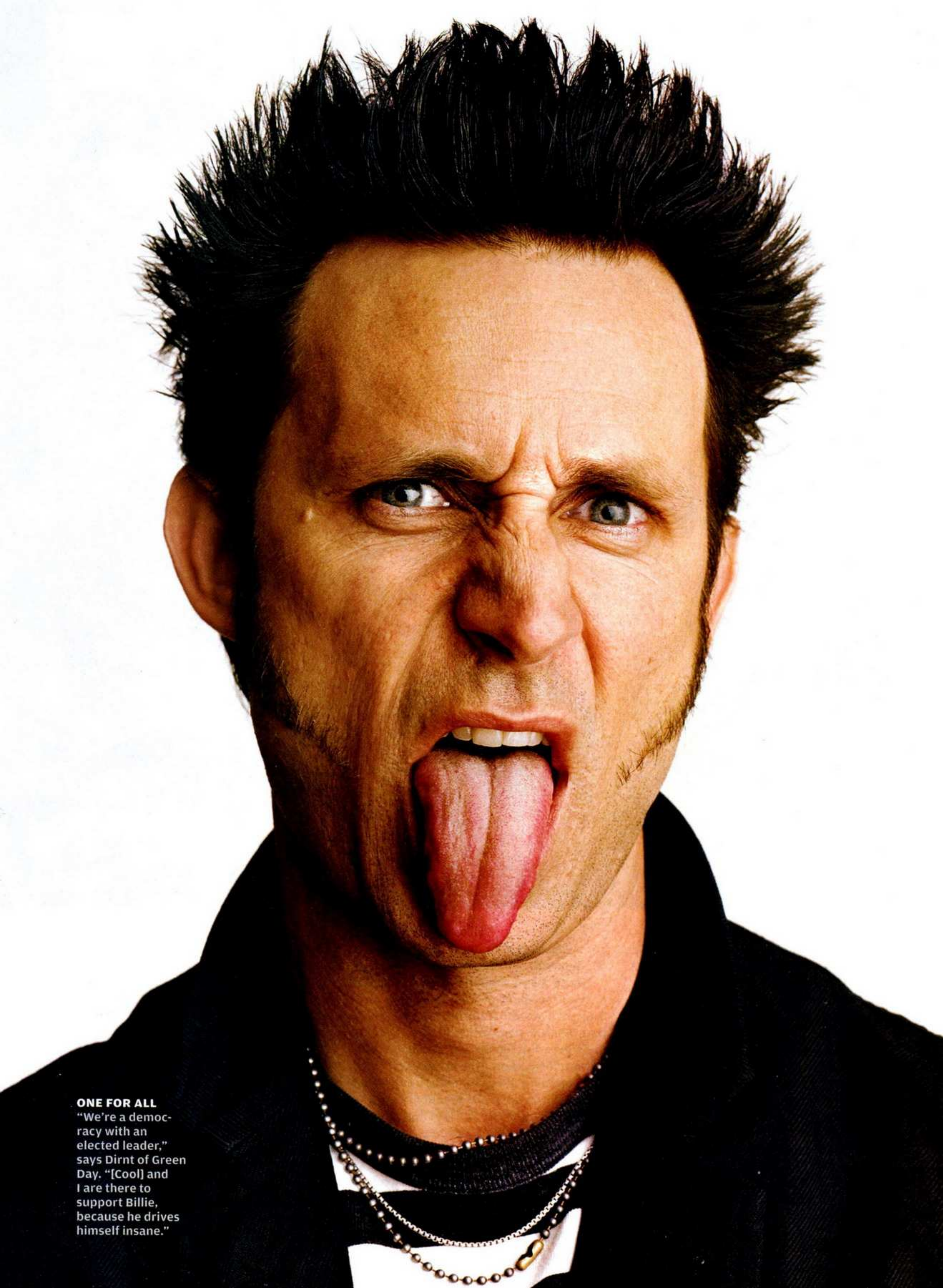
months, while Green Day worked on the music at Studio 880, their recording and practice facility in Oakland, then in pre-production sessions with Vig, Dirnt and Cool had no idea what Armstrong was writing about. "I wouldn't tell them what the lyrics were," he says. His demos were no help. Armstrong mixed his vocals so low, behind the guitars, Cool says, that he and Dirnt "could only understand half of what he's singing." Finally, one day last year, Armstrong sat down with Dirnt, Cool and Vig and read the words aloud to them – every song, in order.

"I look at Christian and Gloria," Armstrong says now, "and it's me. Gloria is one side: this person trying to hold on to this sense of belief, still trying to do good. Whereas Christian is deep into his own demons and victimizing himself over that."

"Sometimes I feel like I'm protecting my kids from myself," he says quietly, as if he's afraid Joseph and Jakob, 10, might overhear him. (They are at an Oakland Athletics game with Adrienne.) "I'll write a song like 'Christian's Inferno' or 'East Jesus Nowhere' and fear they will look at the lyrics. Even Adrienne will look at them and go, 'Is Dad feeling OK?'" Armstrong wrote

**I** COULD TELL YOU WHAT EVERY street is down there," Dirnt says, turning on a stool at a small table next to his kitchen, looking out the glass door to a patio. The bassist lives with his wife, Brittney (they were married in March), their new son and his teenage daughter by a previous marriage





**ONE FOR ALL**  
"We're a democ-  
racy with an  
elected leader,"  
says Dierkt of Green  
Day. "[Cool] and  
I are there to  
support Billie,  
because he drives  
himself insane."





**DREAM TEAM** Dirnt, Armstrong and Cool (from left) in their Oakland studio. "When they lock in, they play like no other band I've worked with," says Butch Vig, who co-produced their new album as well as Nirvana's 1991 *Nevermind*.

in a house that sits on a ridge high over Oakland, near a state nature preserve. Dirnt often goes out back in the morning, in his bare feet, and scans the rolling hills for coyotes, foxes and bobcats.

The view from the patio, though, is even better than Armstrong's. Dirnt can see not only the whole of San Francisco Bay but, right below him, his entire life story and Green Day's early career: the houses, hangouts and clubs in Oakland and Berkeley where he, Armstrong and Cool partied and played before stardom. "I've ridden my bicycle on every street," Dirnt says. "I was born over there" — he points to the left — "a little to the northeast of downtown. It's called Oakland Highland. Nowadays, if you want to get shot,

go to Oakland Highland. They're used to dealing with the trauma."

Green Day are global rock stars. The next-to-last show of their *American Idiot* tour, in December 2005, was for more than 50,000 people in a cricket stadium in Sydney. But Green Day consider themselves a local band. Armstrong and Dirnt grew up in the East Bay area. Cool moved to Berkeley from rural Mendocino County when he was 17. In the late Eighties and early Nineties, they were regulars in the audience and onstage at the 924 Gilman Street Project, the legendary punk co-op in Berkeley. Armstrong wrote much of *Dookie* in a house he and Cool shared with other musicians and itinerants at Ashby Avenue and Ellsworth Street in Berkeley.

Dirnt lived nearby, on San Pablo Avenue, although Armstrong points out, "Mike's lived in every single town around here: El Cerrito, El Sobrante, Rodeo, Crockett, Albany, Berkeley. He's been everywhere."

"This is home for us," Armstrong says of Oakland, "just as much as New Jersey is for Springsteen and Dublin is for U2. We represent it. We're trying to, anyway." Armstrong, Dirnt and Cool live within 15 minutes' drive of one another. Cool has a house on a quiet, tree-lined street much closer to sea level. (He has a girlfriend, Ruri, and a teenage daughter and young son by earlier marriages.) When Green Day are not on tour, they commute regularly to Studio 880, located almost under a freeway in the rough Jingtowntown





section of Oakland. The band's idea of a vacation, during rehearsals for *21st Century Breakdown*, was to write and record an album there of Sixties garage rock as Foxboro Hot Tubs. When people ask Dirnt, "Do you have any advice for my son? He wants to be in a band," his stock response is "Play with your friends."

Armstrong and Dirnt were "inseparable," the guitarist says, from the moment they met. "Both of us felt a void in our lives at the time." Armstrong's father was dying; Dirnt, who was adopted, was bouncing between his divorced parents. At one point, Dirnt, a champion class clown in school, moved into Armstrong's house. "He was a super-high-strung kid," Armstrong recalls, "talking, insulting people nonstop." One of Armstrong's sisters, meeting Dirnt for the first time, chased him around the kitchen with a butcher knife. "I thought, 'That means you're part of the family,'" says Armstrong.

Cool was the most experienced musician in Green Day when he replaced their original drummer, John Kiffmeyer, in time to play on the 1992 album *Kerplunk*. Two years after Cool was born in Frankfurt, where his father was stationed, the family settled on a remote

mountain near Willits, in Northern California. One of the few neighbors was Larry Livermore, a punk in his 30s when he started the Lookouts with the preteen Cool in 1985. Livermore also co-founded Lookout Records, which issued Green Day's earliest records.

"What struck me about Billie first was his melodies," Cool says. "He wasn't screaming as many syllables as you could get in a note. He had this Beatles vibe about him." Cool had trouble fitting into Green Day at first. Dirnt and Armstrong "had a Paul-and-John thing going," meaning McCartney and Lennon. Asked who was who, Cool replies, laughing, "I still don't know. I think Billie is Paul and John now."

"We weren't used to someone with that much high energy," Dirnt says of Cool, which is rich coming from the fast-talking bassist. "Honestly. We'd wake up on tour, and he'd be going first thing in the morning, talking loud. When he was younger, his voice was a lot higher. I'd go, 'Dude, shut the fuck up. I'm gonna kill you.'" In his defense, Cool calls Dirnt "a mean sleeper. Anything for Mike in the morning is a drag. Nobody wants to wake him up. You have to poke him with a long stick and still know where the door is."

Armstrong is Green Day's king songwriter, but there is plenty of truth in the credit line on the band's albums, ALL MUSIC BY GREEN DAY. Armstrong, Dirnt and Cool arrange everything together and rehearse the results with almost military intensity. "They share a sensibility that only comes from time, being so close for so long," says Vig. *21st Century Breakdown* is the first record he's made with Green Day. (Most of their previous Warner Bros. albums were produced with Rob Cavallo.) But he first met them when Green Day and Vig's band Garbage shared some European festival bills.

"They were their own little gang," Vig says. "They would finish each other's sentences. And they were incredible players. When they do that Green Day thing – that uptempo, super-locked-in rhythm – Billie almost turns into a machine."

"We still move at breakneck speed – we wait for no man," Dirnt declares cheerfully. "There is a kid inside each of us that is more substantial than most of the people we grew up with – or most people who grew up in functional families. I feel like a good test to see if an adult has lost their inner child is if they don't have a lucky number anymore or a favorite color."

"I still do. My lucky number is 11. My favorite color is a dark shade of blue."

**O**K, REQUESTS!" ARMSTRONG shouts. "It's request fucking hour!"

The night after the Fox Theater show, Green Day are onstage again – across the street, crammed onto the tiny stage at the Uptown Bar, playing for a cheek-to-jowl crowd of about 220 people. The band performs all of *21st Century Breakdown* again. Then Armstrong throws the second-half set list away, breaking out a Buzzcocks cover and leading the band through a sizzling portion of David Bowie's "Ziggy Stardust" ("We're capable of playing 30 seconds of any song, ever," Armstrong crows). When someone in the audience yells, "Cheap Trick!" Green Day launch into a fantastic medley of "Surrender" and the Replacements' "Bastards of Young," pingponging between the choruses of each song.

"I feel like I've deprived myself for the past three years," Armstrong says that af-

ternoon before the show, referring to the time Green Day labored on *21st Century Breakdown*. "I get onstage, and I feel completely in my element, totally happy. This is where I belong." And that is where he and Green Day will be for at least the next year.

Actually, it doesn't take much coaxing to get Armstrong to talk about the ideas piling up in his head for another Green Day album. The most fanciful one: "I'd like to make a record in China. I'd also like to see Mike become more of a songwriter. I'd like to strip things down, become more acoustic – see how quiet we can get and still have the drama and power behind it."

Armstrong is already involved in a theatrical adaptation of *American Idiot*, directed by Michael Mayer and opening September 4th at the Berkeley Repertory Theater. "Billie is very much a part of it," says Mayer, who directed the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical *Spring Awakening*. "I keep e-mailing him different versions of my scenario – he is totally into the experiments I want to do." Recently, Mayer says, Armstrong told him, "The next thing I want to do is write something completely new for you to direct."

"Right now, he's cursed with a new song in his brain, I'm sure," Cool says. "He can't quiet that." But there is a hint of worry, of nerves, in Armstrong's constant excitement, as if he can't stop running for fear of falling behind. The guitarist tells a story about a school friend, James Washburn, who took a copy of Green Day's first album into English class shortly after it was released.

"I'd already dropped out," Armstrong recalls. "He said to the teacher, 'Look what Billie just did.' The teacher looked at it and started correcting my spelling on it." Armstrong makes a grim chuckling noise. "That can make someone feel pretty insecure and vulnerable."

"Maybe that's the reason most people don't go for it," he says. "You can scare yourself with ambition – having the audacity to want to be as good as John Lennon or Paul McCartney or Joe Strummer. There has been so much great shit before me that I feel like a student: 'Who the fuck do I think I am?'"

"But you have to battle past that," he insists in his rapid forever-punk chirp. "It's the people who are overconfident who are the ones putting out the biggest piles of shit. If you're at that place where you're working hard but don't feel like you know what you're doing anymore, then you're on to something."

Armstrong can't say if Green Day's next record will be another concept monster or just a hip bunch of punk songs. But he will know the idea when it comes, "because it hits me over the head like a ton of bricks. And it's not just an idea. It's an obsession."





**AMERICAN RADICAL**  
West in his office at  
Princeton University





the  
supreme  
love  
and  
revolutionary  
funk of  
dr. cornel west,  
philosopher  
of the  
blues

by jeff  
sharlet

He's gone  
from the Black  
Panthers to  
the Ivy League  
to 'The Matrix'  
- and now he's  
determined to  
be Obama's  
conscience

photograph  
by max vadukul



**C**ORNEL WEST IS A SLENDER MAN, BUT HE HUGS like a sumo wrestler: crouch, grab, wrap and squeeze. “I want to love everybody,” West tells me not long after he greets me at his Princeton University office with a bearhug that is warm and wonderfully conspiratorial. “Ah, yes, Brother Jeff!” he exclaims, like I’ve arrived just in time for a clandestine mission.

❖ I’d feel special if it weren’t for the fact that there’s hardly a soul on Earth whom West won’t call “Brother” or “Sister.” As we walk around town, West embraces and is fully embraced by a maintenance man, a schoolteacher, a group of street missionaries and a class of

fifth-graders visiting from Queens, who recognize him from the cover of his 1993 bestseller, *Race Matters*, still so popular that it’s sold on the street in some inner-city neighborhoods. West never holds back from anyone who wants a piece of him – whether it’s a blessing or banter, an argument with the great man or simply a hug that lasts too long – but he never gets pinned down, either. He locks eyes and holds hands, asks and answers real questions, and then pirouettes away.

West has been called “perhaps the pre-eminent black intellectual of our generation” by Harvard’s Henry Louis Gates Jr., himself a candidate for that mantle. It might be more accurate to say that West is the pre-eminent intellectual of our generation, no qualifiers. No other scholar is as widely read, no other philosopher courted by presidential candidates, no other Ivy League professor referenced not just by other academics but by popular filmmakers (the *Matrix* trilogy, in which West played a bit role, was inspired in part by his work) and musicians (West has collaborated with Prince, KRS-One and jazz trumpeter Terence Blanchard, among others).

What makes West’s fame even more remarkable is the fact that he’s among the most radical figures in American public life. He stumped for Obama last year but only with the caveat that he would be Obama’s number-one critic the day after the inauguration. He started even sooner. In his book *Hope on a Tightrope*, published weeks before Obama’s election, West declares, “I’m not an optimist at all. Brother Barack Obama says he has the audacity to hope. I say, ‘Well, what price are you willing to pay?’”

There is a sense in which this may be West’s moment as much as it is Obama’s. It’s one thing to speak truth to power when the powers-that-be are as crassly reactionary as George Bush; it’s another when all the power is in the hands of the very man you campaigned for. Now is West’s chance to move beyond Democrats and Repub-

licans to the real work of rebuilding the American left. Race, as always, matters – some liberals expected West to give his allegiance to Obama because they’re both black. In fact, West despised Obama’s Philadelphia speech on race – “It was weak, man, weak” – in which the candidate described slavery as America’s original sin. “That’s not true,” West says; American democracy was born out of the dispossession and murder of the continent’s first peoples. To West, that fact doesn’t invalidate democracy, it makes it messy. He thinks it should be messy. At times, he sounds like a conservative: Freedom isn’t free, he says, and anyone who leads you to believe as much is lying. “Innocence itself is a crime in America,” he tells me. He laments what Henry James called our “hotel civilization” – “no darkness, no despair, no dread,

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**“i’m a bluesman  
in the life  
of the mind,”  
west says,  
“a jazzman  
in the world  
of ideas.”**

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no suffering, no grief.” No truth. He roots himself in what he calls “the night side of American democracy” so he’ll be ready for the dawn. He begins with anger so we can end with love.

“My dear Brother Barack,” he tells me one evening at the basement restaurant across from his office, “he’s gotta inscribe himself in the sentimental narrative.” The American Dream, that is, which West sees as a menace to actual democracy, since it carries within it the idea that Americans are special, maybe even better than the rest of the world. West hears that narcissistic tone in Obama’s insistence that “in

no other country on Earth” is his personal story possible and that his story is proof that America is getting better all the time. “Every generation, the union is being perfected,” West paraphrases Obama. “But that’s a lie. There’s retreat, setbacks, moving backward. The history of race in America is not a history of progress.” West thinks Obama’s presidency may become one of those setbacks. “Because you end up with a selective appropriation of Obama and people like him. And his cousins on the street, Jamal and Latisha and Shaquille and all of them, they’re not a part of that. Their suffering is rendered invisible, as people are preoccupied with Obama and Co., who make whites more comfortable, lessen their fears and anxieties, and allow them to embrace him while still demonizing, marginalizing Latisha there!”

West has been jailed for half a dozen causes since he was first arrested as a Harvard freshman at a student protest; his second arrest came when the police rounded up all the black men on his floor after a white classmate claimed she’d been raped by a stranger. Years later, commuting to Williams College in rural Massachusetts to teach a course, West was pulled over and accused of trafficking cocaine. He said he was a professor on his way to a class. “And I’m the Flying Nun,” the cop answered. “Let’s go, nigger.” When West began teaching at Princeton, cops stopped him three times in his first 10 days. He still has a hard time catching a cab in Manhattan.

Critics who accuse him of racial opportunism ignore his commitment to a class-based economics of redistribution. He’s a scholar of Marx, hardly a career booster in America, and a professor of religion, a job that doesn’t lead you to semiregular appearances on *Real Time With Bill Maher*. He comes under frequent fire from his own comrades on the left for his insistence that moral values must be at the heart of any movement worth dying for, which to his mind is the only kind worth fighting for.

“It’s all about witness, brother,” he tells me one evening in his office. “Every person who bears witness has to have the depth of conviction of a martyr. You have to be willing to die. That’s the statement allowing you to live.”

He calls himself “a Martin man,” after King, but not predictably so. His religion is rooted in the angry prophets of the Old Testament and a Christ story as awful as it is redeeming: “The painful laughter of blues notes and the terrifying way of the cross,” he says – a radical Christianity diametrically opposed to the suburban sermons of Rick Warren and Joel Osteen. It’s not a belief in a Christ gladly crucified on Good Friday or risen from his tomb in time for church on Easter Sunday but a faith drawn from a recognition of the despair of the Saturday in between. “That Saturday,” West says, the normal humor of his voice giving way to a growl, “it’s the full-fledged

Contributing editor JEFF SHARLET is the author of *The Family: The Secret Fundamentalism at the Heart of American Power*.





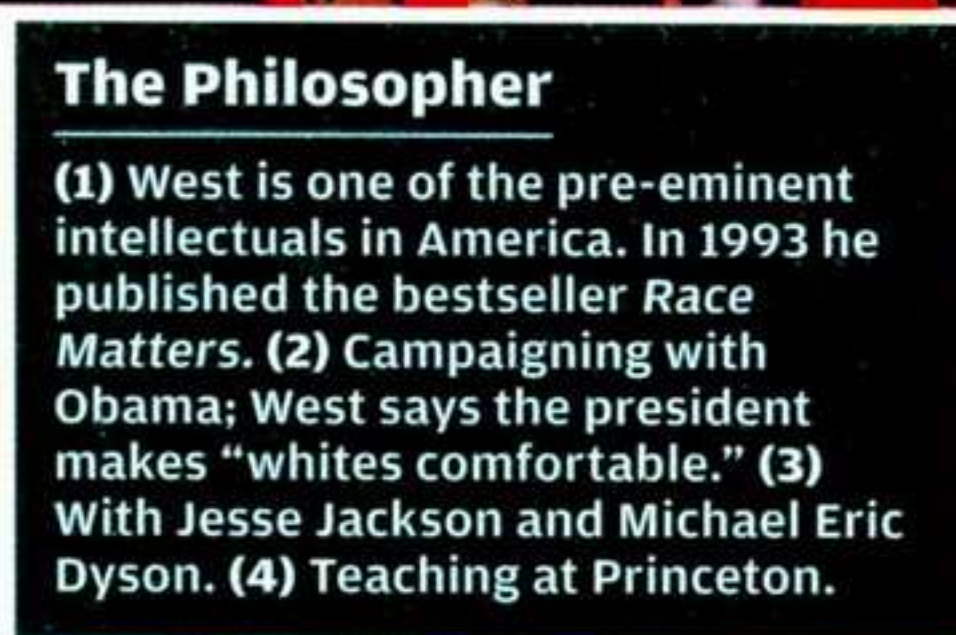
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## The Philosopher

**(1)** West is one of the pre-eminent intellectuals in America. In 1993 he published the bestseller *Race Matters*. **(2)** Campaigning with Obama; West says the president makes “whites comfortable.” **(3)** With Jesse Jackson and Michael Eric Dyson. **(4)** Teaching at Princeton.

experience of the death of God. Which is spiritual abandonment. By any of the positive powers in the universe.” West spreads his arms and his fingers wide, his voice suddenly loud and staccato. “That’s Christ on the cross: ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’” He laughs and shifts into a Richard Pryor voice: “‘Hey, man,’ this Jesus says to the Lord, ‘I thought you were coming through!’”

A few weeks later, West travels to New York to give a speech at the Museum of Jewish Heritage. He lives as much on the road as in Princeton, delivering more than 100 public talks a year. Tonight’s is a tribute to one of his late heroes, Abraham Joshua Heschel, a Polish-born rabbi who marched with King in Selma, Alabama, best known for his book *The Prophets*. West tries to be a prophet himself. “To prophesy,” he writes, “is not to predict an outcome but rather to identify concrete evils.” For him, prophecy is not about divine revelations. It’s about this world, about the radical hope he tempers with the tragic sensibility he takes from the blues. “I’m a bluesman in the life of the mind,” he says, “a jazzman in the world of ideas.”

He dresses the part: a hand-tailored three-piece black suit with cuff links of 25-karat Ethiopian gold, each featuring a tiny image of Africa. It’s an ensemble deliberately reminiscent of jazzmen and preachers, Duke Ellington and “Daddy” King, Martin’s father. Men with callings as well as style – “a sense of vocation,” says West, a pious devotion to the usable past.

“What is piety?” he asks at the Jewish Museum, working the stage like a

tent-revival preacher. He stops, holds one hand up like he’s just caught the word by a wing. “It is the acknowledgment of the debt to those who came before, the source of the good in our lives. Could be your mama, could be your daddy. Could be your jazz teacher, your dance teacher. If you’re religious like myself, it could be God and all of those.” The future, he says – the democracy he dreams of, the democracy we have yet to achieve – demands prophecy, piety “and the poetic. And by poetic I don’t mean a person who writes *verses*.” He draws the word out like an English don. “I mean all those who exercise *imagination* and get us outside of our egocentric *predicament*! Give us a sense of awe and wonder! So we become concerned about something outside of our own little bubbles, our own little slices of reality, our own little professional managerial *spots*” – West makes that sound like a filthy word, then pulls up in a hard pause, hunches down to the edge of the stage and whispers slowly: “our own little iron cages.” He stands. “There’s a lot of material toys in the cages. But you’re still in prison. And poets allow us to shatter those bars.”

When the talk is over, West gets down on his hands and knees so he can greet at eye level the fans filing by the stage, alarm-

ing and delighting one after another as he swings his arms out from under him and hugging every potential poet and comrade in turn.

**W**EST CAME TO HIS SENSE of self by way of a peculiarly American convergence of influences. His is not an “only in America” story but an “especially in America” one, part Emersonian self-reliance, part Motown funk. He’s a “freestyle California spirit,” as he puts it, “rooted in gutbucket blues-and-jazz dispositions.” Even his trademark black suit is layered with influences – beneath jazz and the blues, there’s 19th-century Russian literature. “It’s in emulation of Masha,” he says, one of the heroines of his favorite play, Anton Chekhov’s *The Three Sisters*, a drama of provincial manners set amid the Russian gentry. West identifies with the lonely woman of the story. “She’s wearing black, says she’s in mourning,” he says. “But it’s even deeper than that. How do you make deep disappointment a constant companion and still persevere? There is this sense with Masha, when you see her in that black dress, of having a sad soul with a sweet disposition.”

A conversation with West can go in almost any direction, from Russian theater to Lupe Fiasco (“I ain’t Cornel West,” Fiasco declared on his debut album, *Food & Liquor*, “I am Cornel Westside”), from the late-19th-century Meiji Restoration in Japan to the post-9/11 period, which West describes as the “niggerization” of white America, its encounter with the fundamental fear that has long been inflicted on black people. When he went to Harvard at age 17, he hung two posters in his dorm room: of Malcolm X and of Einstein, each man an exile in America, one a brilliant nationalist, the other a universalist in every sense of the word. West didn’t realize it then, but he was marking off the poles of the territory he would spend his life exploring, a country caught between the reality of racism and the dream of democracy.

West was born on June 2nd, 1953, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, back then known as the “Oil Capital of the World” and also as the site of America’s worst race riot, when tens or maybe hundreds of black citizens were murdered one night in May 1921 – killings anticipated by a headline in the local paper that read TO LYNCH NEGRO TONIGHT. When West was two, his father – “a PK,” says West, “a preacher’s kid” – moved the family to Topeka, Kansas, so he could study biology at Washburn University in the hope of becoming a dentist. Cornel’s older brother, Clifton, was one of two African-Americans in the first kindergarten class after the 1954 *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka* desegregation decision, which began in his school.

In 1958, the family moved to Sacramento, where West’s father had been hired as a ci-



vilian administrator in the Air Force. They lived in a new house in the all-black suburb of Glen Elder. In West's recollection it sounds like a slice of small-town Americana: Friday-night dance parties – "Corn has the gift of gyrating hips," says Cliff. "He was a James Brown, funkified kind of cat" – and Sunday mornings at church. His mother, Irene, read him poetry and played him Nat "King" Cole records. "I don't want it to sound idyllic," Cornel would say years later, "but it was. Love-saturated." The Sacramento of West's youth was a quiet civil-service town of sleepy jobs and no great riches. "I didn't interact with white brothers and sisters. I think, in the end, that was a very positive thing, because it gave me a chance to revel in black humanity."

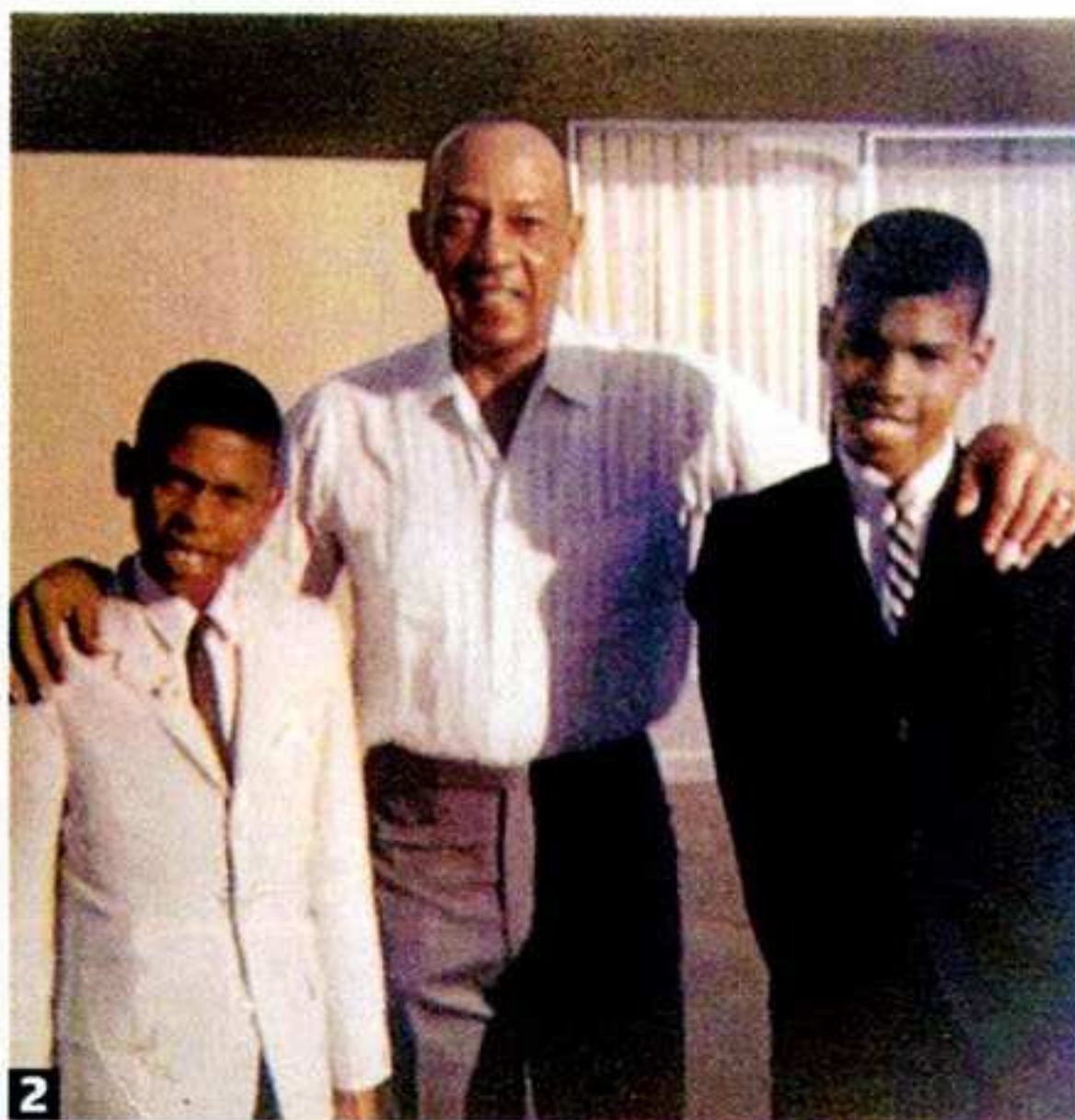
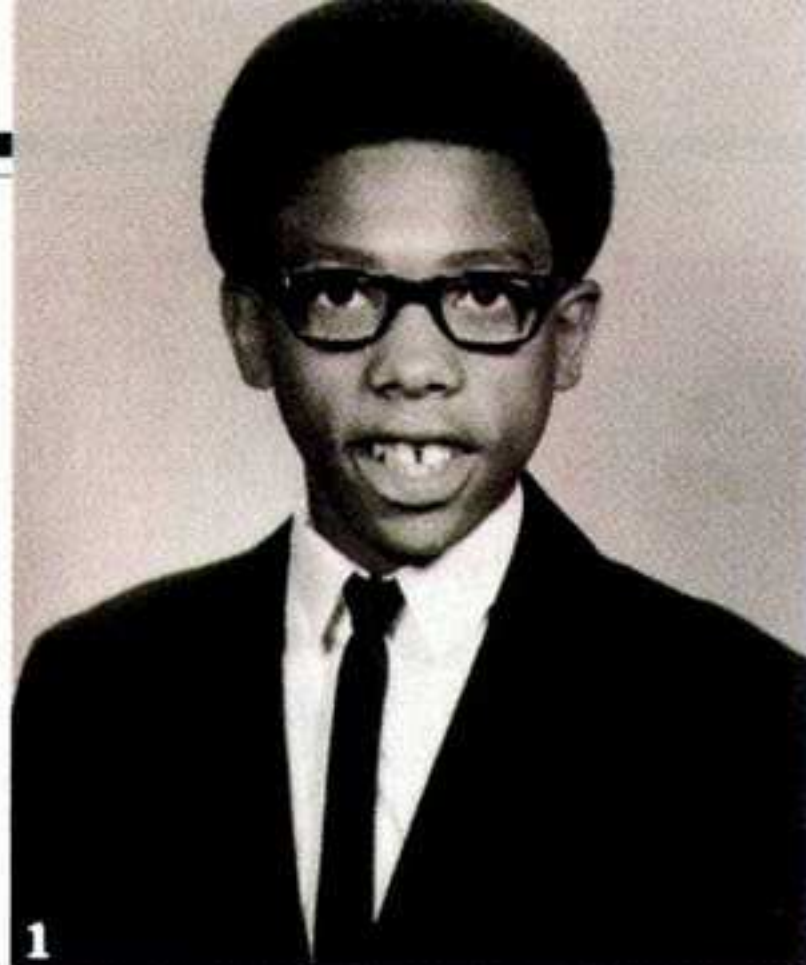
But white America made itself known. Glen Elder was one of three black neighborhoods in Sacramento, each subtly cut off from the rest of the city. To get to school, the Glen Elder kids had to cross a creek. There were two options: They could walk over a rickety wooden footbridge or they could wait for a lull in the traffic and dash across the main bridge, which had no sidewalks or even guardrails and was high enough above the water to make a fall a life-threatening proposition. "If a truck came the same time you were on the bridge," says Cornel, "you'd go under." His neighborhood had no streetlights, no public transportation. "You could just see the racial politics," West says. "You could see Jim Crow."

Cliff knew his little brother was smart. The bridge showed him that Cornel was brave. "There's a signature moment we all go through in life when we have to step out of this box of fear where we're at," Cliff says. "That bridge was Corn's moment. He was five years old and alone, and he had to go across the bridge. Lot of us older kids didn't want to do it, but he did it. That was his moment of stepping out into nothing and landing on something."

"That was the first death shudder," West tells me, 51 years removed from that day and still shaken by it. He's felt them ever since. "The sense of, of sheer feebleness and – and relative helplessness we human organisms experience in the face of cosmos and the face of death and the face of despair. All those things that rattle you, make you shudder and shiver and quiver. After that, it's just a matter of imagining what nonexistence is like, what life is like after bodily extinction."

West kept those ideas to himself. "It was a strange sensibility for a kid. I just think that most people had other things on their mind. You didn't want to distract them or irritate them by sharing these kinds of thoughts that I was having."

The next year, the city built a new school – on the black side, for black children. Cornel understood what was happening. Summer trips to see his grandparents in Texas and Oklahoma made it plainer. "We sat



### The Family Man

West was raised in Sacramento, which he recalls as "Jim Crowed in its own unique California way." (1) In 1970, as a senior in high school, West wound up in classes for gifted children after scoring above 160 on an IQ test. (2) With his older brother, Cliff, and Olympic hero Jesse Owens, in 1967. (3) With Cliff and his sisters, celebrating the 25th anniversary of his parents, Irene and Clifton, in 1974. (4) With Cliff in 2007.

in the back of the bus," remembers Cliff, "couldn't look people in the eye."

"I had a rage, man," says Cornel. He began getting into fights. He'd line kids up and go down the row, relieving them of their milk money. "Everyone in the neighborhood knew I'd be going to jail." When he was eight, Cornel beat another boy so badly he nearly killed him. "I was a gangster," he says, not yet five feet tall. The first time he clashed with a teacher was in second grade, for no good reason. A year later, he did it again. This time it changed his life. "That one was morally inclined," says Cliff.

The family had just returned from Texas. While they had been riding in the back of the bus, the Freedom Riders were being beaten and firebombed for riding in the front. In West's family, old stories were surfacing: Cornel had learned about a great-uncle who had been lynched years before, his broken body wrapped by his killers in a flag. One day, when his teacher told the class to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance, Cornel sat down. "Why we saluting this

thing that don't love us?" he asked. "I'm not gonna do it." The teacher stared. "Cornel West! You stand up right now!" She waited. The other kids got nervous. One by one, several more sat down. The teacher, late in a pregnancy, waddled over to Cornel.

"She hit me first," West says. The principal didn't care. "She hit a little black kid," West remembers. "She got a prize, man. Gotta keep us in order." Cornel was expelled.

At first, no school would take him. Then his mother arranged for an IQ test. He scored north of 160. That won him a seat at Earl Warren Elementary, an "enrichment" school on the far side of town. He was one of two black children in his class, but the students were all geniuses, none so bright as Cornel. He loved it. "Sheer act of grace," he says of the twist by which expulsion led him to the school. He read a biography of Einstein and decided he wanted to be like him. (He took up the violin in emulation of "Albert.") He read a biography of Theodore Roosevelt, and decided he would go to Harvard because "T.R." had. ("I loved his strenuous mood.") He worked his way through every volume in the bookmobile that was the black side of town's only library.

When he was 14, Cornel picked up the book that would make him a philosopher. It was an anthology of the 19th-century Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard is fantastically difficult for a



reader of any age. For young Cornel, the book was a revelation that nothing is as it seems. "In the end," West says now, "we're beings headed toward death. I was convinced for the most part we don't have any control. So you really have to make a leap, you have to acknowledge the magnitude of the mystery." Not so much the mystery of life as the mystery of death. "It is a kind of vertigo," he told the philosopher George Yancy, "a dizziness, a sense of being staggered by the darkness that one sees in the human condition, the human predicament."

He began to have doubts about his faith. To Cornel, the average Christian now seemed like a well-behaved child. Be a good boy or girl, and you'll get your desert in heaven. ("American Christianity," he writes in *Hope on a Tightrope*, is "all about identifying with a winner.") But the "leap of faith," as Kierkegaard conceived it, was absurdly dangerous, like trying to jump across an abyss with no reasonable hope of success. Why try? Because once Cornel felt that first death shudder, ordinary life – waiting to die, living as if you never will – seemed even more awful. There was no choice but to step out into nothing, hoping he'd land on something.

**T**ODAY, KIERKEGAARD IS JUST one face in a crowd lining the walls of West's office in Stanhope Hall, a simple but handsome three-story sandstone building at the heart of the Princeton campus. Nearly every inch of his bookshelves features not the spines of his books but their covers, and every cover has been chosen for its portrait of one of West's heroes. "Brother Fyodor might disagree with that," he'll say, gesturing toward glowering Dostoyevsky, or, speaking of how he learned to love movies, "It was this sister right here," nodding toward an arch-eyed vamp. "Bette Davis. Good God!" Bessie Smith smiles between Herman Melville and Flannery O'Connor. The radical black crime novelist Chester Himes looms beneath a tiny portrait of Le Corbusier, the Swiss-French pioneer of modern architecture. There's bare-chested Fela Kuti, the Afro-beat revolutionary; Maria Callas; Tupac Shakur. A couple of bad men – William Faulkner and Robert Johnson – are bookended by a couple of witty ones, Oscar Wilde and Billy Wilder. "These are soul mates, man," West says. "You carry them around with you, they inhabit your heart and mind and soul."

West has published 18 books, ranging from philosophy to politics to pop culture (his 19th will be a memoir called *Brother West: Living and Loving Out Loud*), but he sees himself mostly as a reader. He reads a minimum of three hours every day, regardless of his schedule, and rarely sleeps more than three hours a night. "I've been blessed with a powerful metabolism," he says. Eddie Glaude Jr., a West pro-

tégé and rising star in African-American studies whose office is across the hall from his mentor's, recalls traveling with West and talk-show host Tavis Smiley, a longtime collaborator of West's. Smiley had just gotten advance proofs of a new book he was about to publish, and he gave Glaude and West copies at the end of a long night, around 2 in the morning. At 7 a.m., all three were on the road to their next event, Smiley and Glaude blinking with fatigue. West was bright-eyed – he had read the book cover-to-cover and wanted to discuss it right away. "The only other reader in my intellectual inventory who's comparable to Cornel is Ralph Waldo Emerson," says Glaude. "And Emerson loses his sight!"

West has a reputation as a ladies' man, but it's hard to believe – how romantic can

**"Obama's a strategist, and I'm suspicious of strategists."**

*it's the quest for the truth vs. the quest for power."*

it be to crawl into bed with your lover and a copy of Georg Lukács' 1923 *History and Class Consciousness*, one of the many texts West rereads every year? Married three times – with a 31-year-old son, Clifton, by his first wife – and separated from the mother of his eight-year-old daughter, Zeytun, West is cagey about his romantic condition: "I'm just dangling and adrift, in a certain sense. I'm hoping somebody's praying for me." In his voice-over for the DVD box set of the *Matrix* trilogy, West strikes a mournful note when Neo and his love interest, Trinity, get intimate. "Love itself is a certain kind of death," West muses. "That deep sense of lack and loss are part of the structure of desire."

"There's a way in which you could think about Cornel as a kind of sick soul," says Glaude. "He begins with the dead, with darkness. He begins with suffering. The blue note. And too often people want to move too quickly beyond that."

"That's the American way," says West when I raise the question of the blue note and its dismissal, the common conviction that looking forward means forgetting the past. "No problem we cannot solve," he says, paraphrasing conventional wisdom. "Well, that's a lie." He laughs, shaking in his

chair, mimicking a voice that sounds like a suburban golfer in pants a size too small. "No problem we can't get beyond. That's a lie! But – it generates a strenuous mood."

This, to West, is a good thing, the naiveté that makes ambition possible. "Engagement!" he says. "I like that. Now, Brother Leopardi, on the other hand" – Giacomo Leopardi, a 19th-century Italian poet-philosopher, little-read in the U.S. – "he starts with what he calls the mind's 'sweet shipwreck.' Ain't that a beautiful phrase?"

Leopardi should be the poet of our times, West tells me – late-empire, midrecession. "You hear about people rereading Steinbeck now," he says, referring to a recent surge in interest in *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck's Great Depression chronicle. "They got to go deeper than that! Steinbeck lets us off too easy." West prescribes Brother Leopardi for "deep-sea diving of the soul." He gets down on his hands and knees, crawling along the bottom shelf until he locates a green volume. "This is the Leopardi." He flips through the pages. "Oh, man! See this one? 'I refuse even hope.'" He repeats the line, his body suddenly slack, staring at me as if to ask, "Do you follow?" West begins to read, rocking forward and backward at his hips like a metronome. "Everything is hidden," he recites, "except our pain." He looks up. "Deep blues, man." He returns to the green book in his hand. "We come, a forsaken race/Crying into the world, and the gods/Keep their own counsel. . . ." I bend close, following the rhythm of his handwritten annotations down the margins: "blues," "jazz," "blues," "jazz."

The blues, West says, is the suffering that's at the heart of the American story, both tragic and comic, darkly grandiose and absurdly mundane. Jazz is democracy, or "deep *dem-oc-racy*," as West likes to say. "Y'see, you take a military band, it's like" – West bangs out a martial beat. "But jazz?" He drums a complicated rhythm. "Under. Below. On the side of the note. Not just the note itself, y'see? It's a powerful critique." Jazz – improvisation – is his answer to things as they are, the negation of the status quo and thus the affirmation of another possibility.

"Now, this, *this* is the greatest one," West says, looking at me with giant eyes as if to communicate the gravity of the words in his hand. He resumes rocking and reads:

*That man has a truly noble nature  
Who, without flinching, still can face  
Our common plight, tell the truth  
With an honest tongue,  
Admit the evil lot we've been given  
And the abject, impotent condition  
we're in;  
Who shows himself great and  
full of grace  
Under pressure. . . .*

West closes the book and stands still. His head shakes back and forth with



admiration. He's almost overcome with gratitude.

"To know the wretchedness of who we are," he says. "Yet the fact that we know it is itself a noble thing, because that kind of knowledge means we can know a whole lot of other things. To know is to be engaged." He points to the craggy features of the Irish playwright Samuel Beckett, staring out from a book cover eye-level with West's desk chair: "Brother Beckett. He doesn't allow despair to have the last word. The last word is what?" He paraphrases *Waiting for Godot*: "I can't go on. I will go on. I can't go on. I will go on. Y'see?"

West hunches his shoulders, striking a pose like a creature about to spring. He fixes a gaptoothed grin, his spectacles framing his eyes like exclamation points at the end of a train of ideas. West likes to say that for him, thought is a weapon, but "train" might actually be the right metaphor – all aboard or miss out on the ride.

"He has an extraordinary ability to connect," says the Rev. Herbert Daughtry, at whose Brooklyn church, the House of the Lord Pentecostal, West preached as much as wrote his first book, *Prophesy Deliverance!*, nearly 30 years ago. (It later became one of the sources for the *Matrix* movies, and it's still cited by radical activists and academic philosophers to this day.) "I've never seen him be pedantic. He's a 'y'all' kind of person. He's like a slow-moving serpent in a sense, coming out of his coil," Daughtry explains. "Then – boom! He hits you with the brilliance of his mind."

**a**ROUND THE SAME TIME Kierkegaard transformed West's understanding of religion, the particulars of American history converged to reveal the reality of race in its rawest form: the murder of Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4th, 1968. That was also the year the Black Panthers came into West's life, when they opened an office close to his church, Shiloh Baptist, in Sacramento. West walked over one Saturday after usher practice. "Young black brother?" They said, "Come on in!"

West knew the image: the black leather jackets, the berets – most of all, the guns. The year before, Bobby Seale had led a contingent of armed Panthers in a march on Sacramento to protest a bill that would outlaw loaded weapons in public. "Looked like a little army," remembers West. There were guns in the office next to the church, too, guns West was glad for – as much guarantee as could be had that the people gathered there wouldn't be killed like Martin. "The problem of violence is that it's often connected to revenge and hatred," West says now. "But certain forms of violence are tied to love on a deep level. Self-defense is self-love." The guns, for West, were on the same plane as James Brown's "Say It Loud – I'm Black and I'm Proud," released that year.

But West never committed fully to the Black Panthers' view of the world. "I could never join, because of my Christian faith," he says. "You had to be an atheist. My whole life as a person on the left, I've been saying, 'I'm with you, but I'm never fully with you,' because I'm a Christian." He believes in Marx's radical critique of capital and empire but believes just as strongly in God. To West, Marxism without what he calls "the love ethic" is inhumane, just as Christianity without a systemic economic and political analysis is incomplete.

West calls himself a libertarian, but he's not the kind who knowingly declares, "I got mine, and tough luck for you if you don't." Libertarianism, in West's view, is a collective affair. The chains that bind the slave also entrap the slave owner; the prison of poverty requires the affluent to act as wardens. We're all locked in a box together. And that means both slave and slave owner must free each other from the framework of slavery, the rigid structures of thought – the matrix, a term present in West's work

**"brother, you  
find me in a  
crack house  
before you  
find me in the  
white house."**

long before the movies – that prevent us from imagining a better way of being.

West sees glimmers of that imagination in Barack Obama, but he thinks the new president is torn between his best and worst inclinations. "He's got gangsters around him," he says. Just as the Panthers had Eldridge Cleaver and the men who loved bullets more than books, Obama has establishment goons like Larry Summers and his protégé Timothy Geithner. West has a personal beef with Summers, with whom he tangled when he was teaching at Harvard and Summers was the university's president (Summers was later forced out). But now, he sees Summers as simply one more representative of a certain political style. "These folks have no history whatsoever to being fundamentally committed to justice for working people," West says. "Nobody else on the team ever thought about defending poor people. Rubinites? No history of it. Arne? In Chicago?" As in Arne Duncan, Obama's secretary of education, who has pledged to run schools like businesses. "Please. Rahm Emanuel? Please! What are we talking about here? He does not have one figure from the social move-

ments who helped promote his campaign. It's the typical move of a newcomer who wants to reassure the establishment. 'Hey, I'm not going to upset you. Your boys are giving me all the advice I need.'"

West campaigned for Obama in Iowa, Ohio, Texas, South Carolina and all over the airwaves, but it was strange advocacy. He derided change as an empty slogan, reminded anti-war crowds that Obama isn't anti-war and warned African-Americans against voting for Obama just because he's black. "I got trashed like I don't know what," West says. "I'd get e-mails from insider Obama people, 'You're hurting the campaign, you're going to impede the first black man from becoming president with your critique, blah, blah, blah.'"

Obama staffers sing West's praises in public, but in private, resentment simmers even now. "Dr. West," a White House source told me on condition of anonymity, "he would go on – I don't want to say on a rant, but on a hoop, as we say in the black church. He might say something that if you were writing his comments, you would prefer him not to have said."

But Obama, West believes, understood: "Because up until the end, he's still allowing me to go to Ohio and do 15 events a day. He knew I had some ability to bring folks in. With Barack, you got a brilliant and clever strategist, and I'm always suspicious of strategists. It's the distinction between the quest for truth vs. the quest for power. My calling is Socratic" – asking tough questions. "His calling is one of running the country" – delivering answers broad enough to satisfy the majority of people most of the time, truth be damned, at least some of the time.

"I think he has progressive potential," West says. "But it will be events that push him. The irony is we're now living in the age of Obama, and Barack may be reluctant to step into his own age. We got to help him do it."

I ask West if, given the chance, he'd take a White House job to help Obama in that direction. It's late in the evening, and we're picking at desserts after dinner and five hours of conversation. West is startled for the first time, his brow furrowing, his eyes narrowing. He looks like I've just called him an Uncle Tom.

"That's not my calling!" he says, rebuke in his voice. Then he softens, laughing to himself. "Yeah, brother, you find me in a crack house before you find me in the White House. I'll go into the crack house before I ever go that far inside."

**t**HE LAST TIME A DEMOCRAT TOOK the White House, West almost gave up on America. "I was ready to go," he says. Ready to leave behind two decades of radical activism, ready to leave behind two failed marriages. It was January 1993, Bill Clinton's inauguration: West watched it from the other side of the





## The Postmodern Prophet

West has crossed over from academia to popular culture. (1) With Kanye West. (2) Recording his 2001 hip-hop album. (3) With Rep. Sheila Jackson, Donna Brazile and Dick Gregory (from left) in New Orleans in February 2008.



Coltrane. In the end, as a bluesman, as a jazzman, it's about the life that you live that is artistically and musically shaped. And you can do that in the academy or the street, you can do it in the library, the basketball court, the nightclub."

You can even do it in America. In fact, for West, you must. "I'm for the revitalization of democratic possibility *within* the empire," he says. "I'm still part of the American grain."

West is sometimes criticized from the left as a reformer rather than a revolutionary. There is a sense in which that is a radical understatement. West is a conservative in the truest, oldest sense. He's inspired by Giambattista Vico, an 18th-century Italian philosopher who pointed to the common roots of "human" and the Latin *humando*, which means "burying." To be a scholar of the humanities – to be human – is to begin with the dead, to see that our futures are linked to our pasts, to acknowledge, deep in our bones, the truth of our own dying selves, "from womb to tomb," West says.

For him, this is a present fact. Several years ago, he was diagnosed with stage-IV prostate cancer, given months to live. Instead, he has thrived. But the cancer isn't gone, merely "contained." Then again, that's the way it's always been for him. "Wrestling with death," he writes, "not simply as some event that's going to happen to you at the end of your life, but calling into question certain assumptions and presuppositions that you had before you arrived – that's learning how to die." That, for West, is the beginning of freedom. "To learn how to die in this way is to learn how to live."

There's something almost funny about that paradox. Not funny "ha ha" but funny like the blues, the absurdity of a situation – from slavery to segregation to a simple broken heart – so painful that the bitter laugh of the blue note becomes resistance to suffering. "Subversive joy," West says. It's an American tradition, John Coltrane's jazz and Bessie Smith's growl, the deepest rhymes of hip-hop and even the wisdom of dead white men. "The impassioned odes to democratic possibility in Walt Whitman," West writes in *Democracy Matters*, "the dark warnings of imminent self-destruction in Herman Melville."

Consider *Moby-Dick*, he says one evening at a bar across the street from his office. It's the quintessential American novel, and look how it ends: the whaling ship dashed to smithereens, crazy Ahab gone beneath the sea, and only the narrator, Ishmael, left alive, clinging to a coffin in the whirlpool that's swallowed them all. "Most critical," says West, hunching forward and giving me a great, gaptoothed grin, waiting for me to catch up. "The raft," he says, running his fingers along the edge of the table, nudging me toward his favorite kind of ending, tragic and comic at the same time. "The coffin constitutes a raft. He's spared to tell the tale."

world, and the better way of being he was imagining was a new life in his adopted homeland, Ethiopia. He had moved there with his third wife, Elleni, Ethiopian royalty after a fashion, a direct descendant of the modern nation's founder.

"Brother Lerner," he told Rabbi Michael Lerner, a close friend with whom he was working on a book of black-Jewish dialogues, "I may not be coming back."

"I understood the attraction," says Lerner. "Being in a society where you're not a minority, where there's a possibility of being more regular, less bizarre. Cornel is a lonely person. For a long time, I thought I was his best friend. But he had probably about 1,000 best friends. That made him more isolated. It was more like he had a whole lot of one-night stands. Not sexual, of course, but in terms of intimacy. People would fall in love with him, and I believe he genuinely fell in love with them. So much intensity, but not depth." Lerner isn't calling his friend shallow. He believes West is one of the most profound thinkers he's ever encountered: "West has a prophetic consciousness." That's language no honest rabbi dispenses lightly.

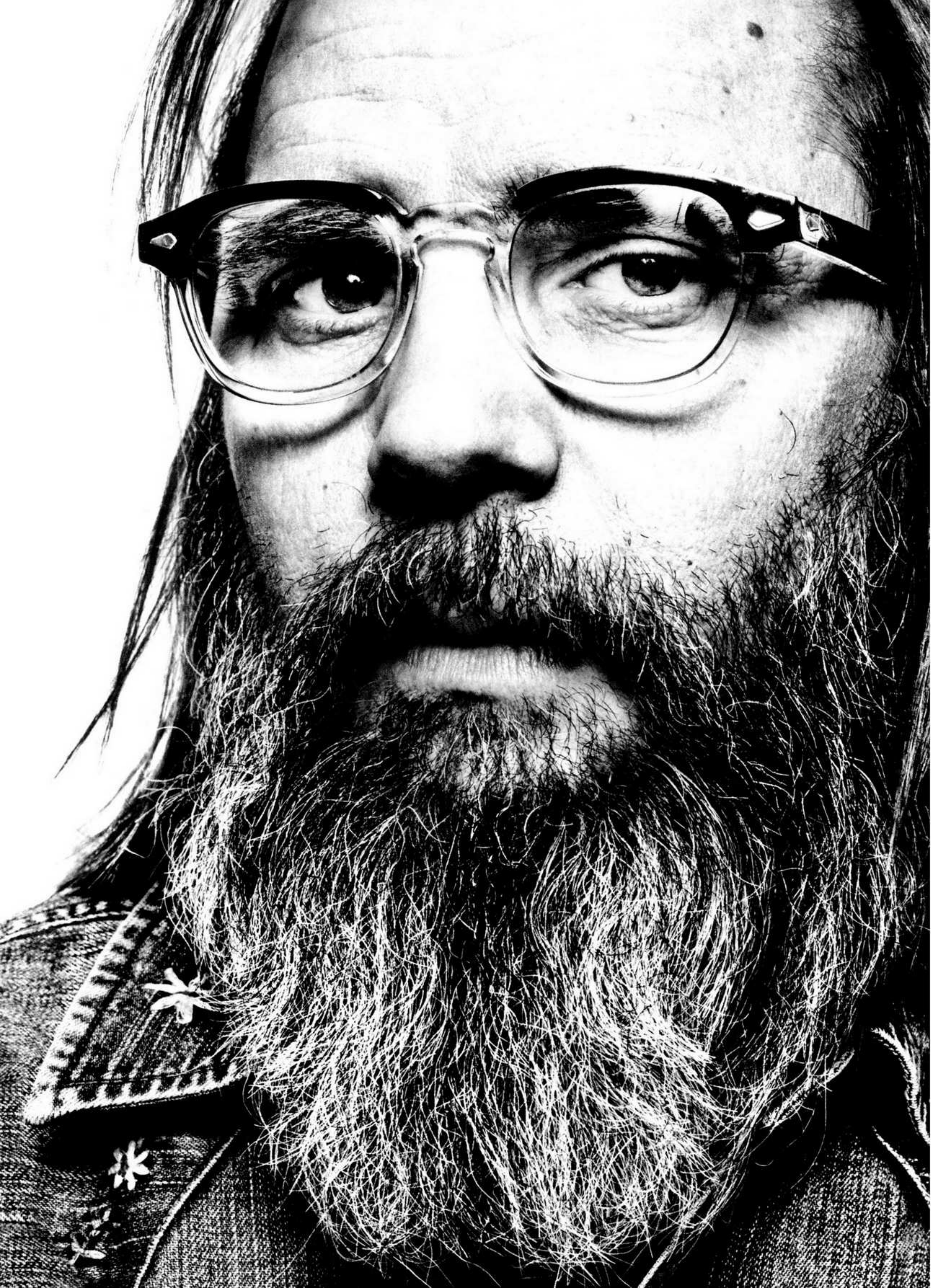
But that's the trouble. When West speaks of love, he means a "steadfast commitment to the well-being of others, especially the least of these." That demands a lot of love, but West doesn't stop there. "Justice is what love looks like in public," he says. "And deep democracy is what justice looks like in practice."

West is steadfastly anti-utopian. He thinks perfectionist illusions drive both religion and radicalism to murderous ends. He knows that love for all is a hopeless cause and that justice is a hopeless cause too. As for true democracy? Not a chance. It's a blues dream of a jazz impossibility.

I ask West why he came back to America. His marriage was fading – "It's hard to pursue a vocation and have a high-quality relationship," he says – but his star was rising, as *Race Matters* became a bestseller. "Cornel West became 'Cornel West,'" as his former student Glaude puts it.

West's answer, though, is both more personal and more abstract. "Two reasons," he says. "My mother" – West's father died in 1994 – "and the music." The Whispers, the Stylistics and the Dramatics; Curtis, Marvin and Aretha; Sinatra, Sassy and









# STEVE EARLE CHASES GHOSTS

The country rocker nearly died emulating his damaged, alcoholic hero, Townes Van Zandt. Now, on a new tribute album, Earle looks back  
By Joe Hagan ♣ Photograph by Platon

ONCE UPON A TIME, A SELF-DEPRECATING answering-machine message did most of the talking for Steve Earle: "This is Steve. I'm probably out shooting heroin, chasing 13-year-old girls and beating up cops. But I'm old and I tire easily, so leave a message and I'll get back to you." ♣ He usually didn't. Instead, he spent his hours in locked bathrooms plunging a needle into his arm and, later, passed out in crack houses in Nashville, all his guitars sold off for drugs, his reputation as an outlaw troubadour eating him alive. When he was finally hauled to jail for drug possession in 1994, he had his last \$20 in his jeans. ♣ If the Steve Earle of yore could see the Steve Earle of today, he'd scarcely believe his eyes. On a recent evening in Woodstock, New York, he's padding around a two-story ranch house in a leafy subdivision originally built for IBM middle managers, showing off his heated pool. From the sleek



modernist furniture and retro Fifties light fixtures to the flatscreen TV in the kitchen blaring *Inside Edition* ("Oprah's puppy died," reports Earle's seventh wife, the singer Allison Moorer), it's a vision of domestic bliss. (When I run into him at a nearby grocery store, Earle is buying a case of Diet Dr Pepper.)

Earle, being Earle, is slightly embarrassed by the Ozzie and Harriet-like scene. It was Moorer's idea to buy a country house two hours from their apartment in Manhattan, he tells me. And he's only holed up here to finish the novel he's been laboring over for several years. "I'm pretty allergic to being in the city limits



of any one municipality for more than 30 days," he says. "I'm going fucking bugshit up here right now finishing this book. I want to go back to the city so bad."

When he first broke out in the 1980s, Steve Earle seemed to live the same rootless life as the characters in his songs, a road warrior with a "two-pack habit and a motel tan," as he sang in "Guitar Town." Now he's enjoying what one friend calls his "Renaissance man" period – writing plays and fiction, acting in TV and movies, refashioning himself as a Marxist alt-country bard à la Woody Guthrie and moving from Nashville to Greenwich Village to indulge a passion for folk musicology and expensive guitars (he owns 120 of them). Much of this was made possible when Earle sold the rights to half of his back catalog for seven figures in 2007 and managed to catch up with years of alimony, child support and the monthly costs of keeping assorted family members solvent, not to mention \$500,000 in unpaid taxes.

Now, on his 13th solo disc, Earle has decided to check in with a younger version of himself, making an album called

*Townes*, featuring 15 songs written by Townes Van Zandt, the late Texas country songwriter and cult legend who mentored Earle as a young man and shaped his rough-and-tumble life in music. Recorded mostly in Earle's New York apartment last October, the record, he says, represents "the part of Townes that became me, that's a part of me."

Earle and Van Zandt met in the 1970s, and they remained friends until Van Zandt's death in 1997, at age 52, by which time Earle had chosen self-preservation over Van Zandt's dark path. If Earle once looked like a rangy Hells Angel, at age 54, happily married and 14 years sober, he resembles an avuncular poetry professor: balding, long hair, black-frame glasses studiously perched over his nose, abundant beard streaked with silver, a generous belly. But as he mines the myths of his own past to make peace with the present, he is also coming to terms not just with the legacy of excess and art he inherited from Townes Van Zandt but with the thornier legacy he's passing on to his son, the 27-year-old singer-songwriter Justin Townes Earle.



**I**N 1972, STEVE EARLE OVERHEARD A man talking about a birthday party being thrown for Texas country legend Jerry Jeff Walker in Austin, where Earle was living. He crashed the party and, around 2 a.m., in walked the tall, lanky form of Townes Van Zandt, wearing a white buckskin jacket with fringe on the arms. "He started a craps game and lost every dime that he had, *and* that jacket," recounts Earle.

By then, Van Zandt was already a legend to Earle, who had himself, at 16, dropped out of school in suburban San Antonio to become a songwriter, developing a taste for heroin and traveling with circus carnies. From the beginning, Earle recognized that his hero had given up everything for his music. "I saw something I didn't count on," remembers Earle, flipping a large silver coin over and over on the table in his spacious den. "It was the beginning of me piecing together that

Townes didn't have any money and he wasn't rich. And was doing this because he really wanted to do it."

As Van Zandt once instructed, "You have to blow off your family. You have to blow off comfort. You have to blow off money. . . . You have to blow off your ego. You have to blow off everything except your guitar."

Earle dutifully followed, becoming part of Van Zandt's circle of drifters, drinkers and guitar-pickers around Houston, and later Nashville, where the two eventually converged to seek their fortunes as professional songwriters. Over time, Earle became intimately familiar with Van Zandt's bottomless-pit drinking and bizarre, even scary, antics. "I saw him eat a 50-dollar bill one night," he says. "He literally put it in his mouth, chewed it up and swallowed it. He thought it was



### Earle's World

(1) Earle in Texas, at 14, the year he first dropped out of school. (2) With Van Zandt, who mentored Earle as a young musician after the two met in the 1970s. Earle named his son Justin Townes Earle (3) after Van Zandt, who died in 1997.

funny. But he didn't have any money the next day either."

From Van Zandt, Earle absorbed poetry, literature, fingerpicking styles and a sophisticated lyric sensibility, all while getting into legendary misadventures. Once, while visiting Van Zandt at his cabin in rural Tennessee in the late Seventies, Earle was bragging about his burgeoning gun collection when Van Zandt, exasperated with his young acolyte, loaded a single bullet into his .357-caliber Magnum, spun the revolver, pressed it against his temple and pulled the trigger. Earle was horrified – and angry. He "beat the hell out of" Van Zandt and left. "It was the only time I ever got physical with him," he says. "It took me a long time not to be angry about it."

As Earle honed his professional chops as a songsmith in Nashville, he remained close to Van Zandt, but he also made a conscious decision to distance himself from Van Zandt's circle of hangers-on. "I found myself being one of the people around him that was hurting him, and I

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withdrew from that by the early Eighties," he says. "There were people who thought I was kind of a sellout because I usually had a publishing deal."

Van Zandt continued to be an important part of Earle's musical identity. When Earle's son Justin was born in 1982, Earle gave him the middle name Townes as a tribute to his friend (to which Van Zandt replied, "Is that after anybody in my family? Ha, ha, ha").

As Van Zandt slowly deteriorated, Earle went on to wider success, starting with his major-label debut, *Guitar Town*, in 1986, a record inspired in part by seeing Bruce Springsteen perform on the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour. In a career Earle calls "the most fucked-up thing you can possibly imagine," he parlayed an initial success in country radio into a crossover fan base, playing the edges of rock and

it was taking so long. And, you know, it was love."

After a stint in prison for drug possession and a stay in rehab, Earle returned with *I Feel Alright* in 1996 – by which time Van Zandt was on his last leg, his live shows a spectacle of pathetic drunkenness. Around that time, Earle played the guitar part for Van Zandt's rerecording of "If I Needed You." "It was harder for him to fingerpick at the time," recalls Earle. "He had a fair amount of nerve damage."

After hip surgery, Van Zandt died of a heart attack at his home near Nashville, in 1997. Earle led his funeral ceremonies.

On *Townes*, Earle wanted to capture the Van Zandt he recalled from memory, when his friend was at his peak in the 1970s, quasi-sober and playing with only his guitar on stages in Austin. "I started trying to remember it as much

Earle says he wasn't prepared for how "extremely emotional" recording Van Zandt's songs would be, part of a "fragmented" mourning process over his mentor's death. Moorer says the album has a "vulnerability" to it "that I haven't heard in a while." But when he's asked to describe the feelings he experienced, Earle is elusive. While he's at ease repeating old stories, he struggles to explain the emotional center of this new record, digressing into abstract monologues about the nature of death. "Dying is part of living, and I wish he was still here, but I'm not . . . I'm not arrogant enough to think it has anything to do with me one way or another," he says, plucking on an expensive ukulele that's part of his massive guitar collection. Earle, it seems, still doesn't fully understand what connects him to these songs.

## "I SAW TOWNES EAT A 50-DOLLAR BILL ONE NIGHT. LITERALLY CHEWED IT UP. THOUGHT IT WAS FUNNY. BUT HE DIDN'T HAVE ANY MONEY THE NEXT DAY."

country formats before his career hit the skids in the early 1990s. As the money rolled in, Earle slid back into drugs harder than ever, injecting his growing fortune into his arm.

At the time, Earle feared he couldn't write songs if he wasn't high. Eventually, he stopped writing songs altogether and began disappearing for days into the crack houses of Nashville. Professionally, he became an unreliable ghost of his former self: In 1992, he began canceling shows for the first time because of drug sickness and lost a producing job for Virgin Records after showing up high to a company dinner party and falling face-first into his plate.

According to legend, Van Zandt came by to check on Earle during the height of Earle's heroin addiction, asking him if he was using clean needles. When Earle said he was, Van Zandt replied, "OK, listen to this song I just wrote."

"And that was the first time I heard 'Marie,'" says Earle. He covers the song on *Townes*.

On the face of it, the story suggests a remorseless dedication to living on the edge, but Earle has always considered the moment to be a loving one. "We were both dying," he says, "and he knew he was dying, and he couldn't figure out why it was taking so long, and I knew I was dying, and I couldn't figure out why

as possible and reconstruct that as much as possible," says Earle. "There's some sort of echo in me of how good he was. . . . It's fundamentally part of who I am as a guitar player, so when I try to do it, it's authentic."

Earle recorded the album in his Greenwich Village apartment, working 11 hours a day for a week. With the "record" button on, Earle maintained a rolling, Van Zandt-inspired meditation, relating impromptu stories and stray recollections about his mentor. The recording engineer, Steve Christensen, told Earle he felt like he was "listening to something I shouldn't be listening to," because it seemed so personal. Which is when Earle says he "realized that's what the criteria is, that's how I don't fuck this up." (He hasn't figured out yet what he'll do with the recorded anecdotes.)

Afterward, in a Nashville studio, Earle added percussion and bass to some tracks and recorded a bluegrass version of Van Zandt's "White Freightliner Blues." On "Lungs," one of Van Zandt's most bitterly desolate songs, John King of the producing team the Dust Brothers layered on vocal effects and electric guitar by Tom Morello. Earle's wife, Moorer, sings with Earle on two numbers, including the closer, "To Live Is to Fly" – the words that are engraved on Townes Van Zandt's tombstone.

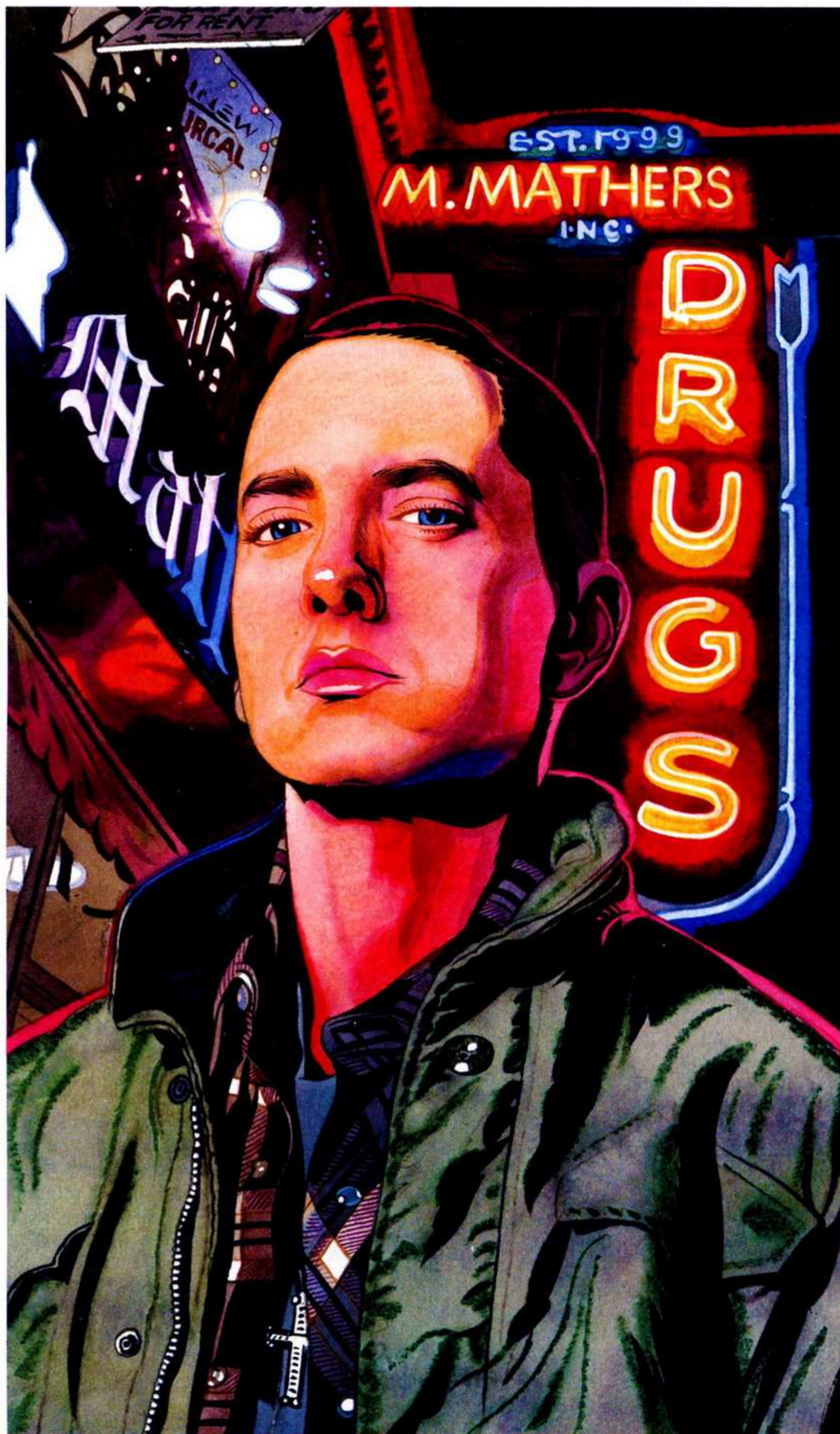
**E**ARLE CONCEDES HE SAW VAN Zandt as a romantic hero in his youth. But trying to live out the songs took its toll, and it affected not just Earle but also his son Justin, whom Earle abandoned when Justin was two years old, following a divorce from his third wife. While Earle was sliding into drug addiction – marrying four more times in a span of 12 years and producing another son, Ian, by wife number four, and a daughter from a one-night stand – the son named for Van Zandt nursed a deep anger at his father. "I grew up with my mom, and my mom hated Townes and hated my dad," says Justin, recalling Van Zandt as a "scary" figure to him as a child. "He was wild and goofy, and he always smelled funny, which I found out later was Southern Comfort." Van Zandt, Justin adds, "was one of the first people I saw that was out-of-this-world fucked up, and people thought he was great for it."

By 12, Justin was taking heroin and earning himself a reputation for juvenile delinquency. It was then that his father, fresh out of rehab, finally showed up to take custody of him, in 1995. While they lived together, Justin stole Earle's pistol from his nightstand, prompting Earle to throw Justin into the trunk of a car and drive him to a wilderness camp for behaviorally challenged teens. "It was like trying to wrestle a live deer into your trunk," [Cont. on 78]



# Reviews

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Meanwhile,  
back in Shady  
Land: Pills,  
self-loathing,  
other trouble

**Eminem** ★★★★★

*Relapse* Aftermath/Interscope

BY ROB SHEFFIELD



SO HOW DID Eminem spend his time off? Drugs, mostly. "I

fall in bed with a bottle of meds and a Heath Ledger bobblehead" doesn't even begin to cover it. *Relapse*, Em's first album in nearly five years, is studded with brand names, but not Lexus or Cristal – more like Lunesta, Ambien, Vicodin, Valium, NyQuil and other brain candy that helped Marshall Mathers turn himself into a zombie, before he got clean last year. It's hard to keep all the drugs on this album straight, but that's probably the point. *Relapse* is like a hip-hop version of Richard Pryor's *Live on the Sunset Strip*, the classic 1982 stand-up flick where Pryor makes the audience squirm through jokes about freebase addiction and setting himself on fire. If it's stronger than his last album, *Encore*, that's because Em's doing what he does best: cleaning out his closet. And there's more psychotic shit piled up in there than ever.

The power of *Relapse* comes from Em aiming his beat-downs at his truest target, himself. By letting Dr. Dre take over the low-end-funk production, and rhyming about things he actually cares about, he comes up with a more painful, honest and vital record than anyone could have expected at this late date, up there with *The Eminem Show* or maybe even better. The album it recalls most is his 1999 major-label debut, *The Slim Shady LP*, from the stripped-down



Dre beats to the self-lacerating wordplay. There are no familiar pop samples from Aerosmith or Martika or Heart, no rock choruses, no guest cameos beyond a couple of verses from Dre and 50 Cent. Instead, Em gets down to business, because this guy's got real problems. (None of which he blames on his ex-wife, Kim, who isn't even mentioned – whew.) “What’s a beer?” he asks at one point. “That’s a devil in my ear/I been sober a fucking year/And that fucker still talks to me, he’s all I can fucking hear.”

“Déjà Vu” is a brutally funny confessional, unpacking the whole gruesome story of where Em’s been lately: addiction, rehab, overdoses, ambulances, hiding his pills from his daughter in video boxes. When he went to the hospital in December 2007, it was reported as pneumonia, but Em admits, “That whole pneumonia thing/That was baloney/Was it the methadone, ya think?” When Hailie finds him passed out in his car with a bag of Three Musketeers bars, he makes excuses and pops more pills: “It’s 12 noon, ain’t no harm in self-inducing a snooze/What else is new?/Fuck it/What would Elvis do in your shoes?” He’s always made a joke out of identifying with Elvis, but the joke stings a little more now that he’s passing out cold on the bathroom floor.

Sobriety hasn’t brightened his personality, that’s for sure. “Insane” begins, “I was born with a dick in my brain/Fucked in the head,” and goes on to elaborate a disturbing tale of childhood molestation. “My Mom” takes on a familiar object of scorn, but with the claim that his mom is exactly who he’s turned into, drugging himself into a stupor in front of his kid. In the singsong chorus, he chants, “I’m on what I’m on/Because I’m my mom.” At the end, he mutters, “Sorry, Mom. I still love you, though.” (Good Lord, is he doing Step Nine? Because that will take him at least three or four entire albums!)

Just as Richard Pryor looked miserable taking audience requests for corny old Mudbone routines, there are songs here where Em flogs himself through the motions to rehash same-old

# Passion Pit Bring Back Clubland

**What started as a tape for a girlfriend turns into a bona fide dance-music phenomenon**

**Passion Pit ★★★★★**

**Manners** Frenchkiss



FROM ANIMAL COLLECTIVE’S PSYCHEDELIC collages to the Yeah Yeah Yeahs’ punk disco, electronic music has been invading the indie-rock world lately, as bands mix dance-floor science with do-it-yourself hooks and histrionics. Now please welcome Michael Angelakos, the 21-year-old drama queen at the core of Passion Pit. Dude’s got a window-rattling falsetto, and his hyperemotional electro pop comes complete with romantic back story (a Valentine’s Day gift tape to a girlfriend, which became last year’s *Chunk of Change* EP, earned him a label deal and sold-out club gigs).

Passion Pit’s full-length debut proves he isn’t fronting: It’s a shiny bouquet of synth-pop roses, with perfumed Eighties keyboard whooshes and modern stutter beats crooking a finger toward the dance floor. Angelakos takes full advantage of his resources: There are horns, a string section, even an elementary-school choir. But what makes the record are his loose beats, shamelessly fruity melodies and breathless little-boy vocals, all pushing skyward. “Eyes as Candles” cops Abba’s vocal sugar, and “Swimming in the Flood” has the smooth sad-sackness of a good Phil Collins ballad. All the endorphin-mongering can get dizzying, but it’s offset by charmingly tortured lyrics. “You’ve left me shimmering/Like diamond wedding rings!” he declares, ecstatically heartbroken, on the dulcimer-decorated “Moth’s Wings” – a song that, like others, recalls Ben Gibbard’s electro-weezy side project, the Postal Service. Like all disco divas, Angelakos knows sadness and musical ecstasy can go great together. “My pity song/Hovering on your front lawn,” he implores, as if on bended knee under the window. OK, already: We’re coming down!

**Key Tracks:**  
“Sleepyhead,”  
“Little  
Secrets”

WILL HERMES



**ARE YOU PASSIONATE?**  
Jeff Apruzzese, Nate Donmoyer, Ian Hultquist, Ayad Al Adhamy, Angelakos (clockwise from left)

shtick. The singles “Crack a Bottle” and “We Made You” are two of the weakest cuts, recycling beyond-stale boasts and celebrity disses. (Who were Amy and Blake, again?) In phony woman-baiting and gay-hating rants like “Stay Wide Awake,” he sounds like an old retired hockey coach yelling at the kids on his lawn. In moments like these, he sounds unsure of himself, trying to guess what people expect from him, and that eager-to-please sweat doesn’t suit him. It’s no coincidence that the one where he raps about killing Lindsay and Britney is called “Same Song and Dance,” as if even he realizes how played-out these jokes are – the only shocker is that he left out Nicole Richie.

He sounds more honestly screwed up in “Beautiful,” his touching attempt at an inspirational ballad, singing, “Don’t let them say you ain’t beautiful” in his gawky voice. On the other end of the emotional spectrum, there’s “Old Time’s Sake,” where Dre drops tasteless lines about getting Em stoned again. “Medicine Ball” goes back to cracking mean jokes about poor old Christopher Reeve – but in one of the album’s funniest moments, Em turns himself into Reeve so the late, great Superman can get the last word in from beyond the grave: “Eminem, I’m coming to kill you/I always hated you and I still do.”

There’s a lot of hate on *Relapse*. Eminem hates himself for getting sober only slightly less than he hates himself for doing drugs in the first place. He hates himself for being famous, for hating his mom, for taking so long to make this album. (In one skit, his old nemesis Steve Berman taunts him, “You hide out in Detroit for almost five years while the music industry melts the fuck down? You know how many people lost their jobs because of your fucking vacation?”) All that negative energy helps him fight the temptation to become comfortably numb. If you hate Em, he probably wouldn’t blame you. But *Relapse* is reason to be glad he’s still around.

**Key Tracks:** “Déjà Vu,” “Beautiful,” “Insane”



## Jarvis Cocker

★★★★½

Further Complications

Rough Trade

**Ex-Pulp leader cranks guitars, looks for Mrs. Right Now**



IN PULP, JARVIS Cocker was a Brit-pop rake who could dissect the English class system and sound suave doing it. Fast-forward 10 years, and he's a somewhat less suave, middle-aged beard jockey on a never-ending quest for twentysomething ass. Produced by Steve Albini, Cocker's excellent second solo disc sets hilariously over-the-top come-ons to bruising garage rock and woozy soul – on "Leftovers" he tries to sex up a foxy paleontologist, on "Angela" he goes after a girl who's "nearly 23/making \$4.50 an hour" and who offers a complimentary shower. The corker is "I Never Said I Was Deep," where he informs, "I'm not looking for a relationship/Just a willing receptacle." Hard to believe the guy's single. JON DOLAN

**Key Tracks:** "Angela," "I Never Said I Was Deep"

## Micachu and the Shapes

★★★★★

Jewellery Rough Trade

**How much ass can you kick with a toy guitar? Listen here**



EVERY NOW AND then, a ferocious little band comes along to reteach the old punk-rock lessons: 1) Less is more; 2) Short, sharp and shouty is great; 3) And a toy guitar, played with little skill, can kick as much ass as a real one. Meet Micachu and the Shapes, a U.K. trio helmed by the owner of that tiny toy acoustic, 21-year-old Mica Levi. The 13 songs here average just 2:30 in length, but they cram a lot in: raggedy strumming, clanking percussion and a symphony of squeaks and buzzes courtesy of producer/electronica whiz Matthew Herbert. But the guiding force is Levi – an instant punk heroine, thanks to that adorable guitar. JODY ROSEN

**Key Tracks:** "Lips," "Golden Phone," "Curly Teeth"

## BUY THESE NOW

### Green Day

21st Century Breakdown

Reprise

How do you follow *American Idiot*? With a three-part rock opera. America's most improbable rock maestros make their second Seventies-style epic, sporting their glossiest ballads and most barrel-chested punk anthems yet.

### Conor Oberst and the Mystic Valley Band

Outer South Merge

Meet the new Bright Eyes, woodshedding with his new band and giving up some songwriting duties. Sometimes you wish he hadn't, but there are plenty of gems here.

### Crocodiles

Summer of Hate

Fat Possum

A repeat-ready 34 minutes of melodic pop with heavy Echo and the Bunnymen/Jesus and Mary Chain influences, pushed to the breaking point.

## Marilyn Manson

★★★★½

The High End of Low Interscope

**Seven albums in, it's hard out there for a shock rocker**



AT A TIME WHEN extreme sex and violence are available 24/7/365 at the click of a mouse, Devil Incarnate is a career choice that pays increasingly diminishing returns. But Marilyn Manson still wants the gig. In 1996, refrains like "You're as pretty as a swastika" and "It's Arma-goddamn-motherfuckin'-geddon" might have raised a few hackles, but in 2009 those lyrics hold little shock value. The best moments come in ballads like the blues-tinged "Four Rusted Horses." In such songs, Manson is almost endearing: just a big, melancholy dude with face paint. It's a less glamorous job title than Antichrist Superstar, but these days, it suits him better. J.R.

**Key Tracks:** "Four Rusted Horses," "We're From America"

## Beck

REISSUE

★★★★★

One Foot in the Grave

Iliad

**Folkie Beck, before he was a postmodern groove poet**



BEFORE HE WAS A midnight vulture or a *guero* preaching the gospel of Latin groove music, Beck was a subversive folkie, inspired equally by Sonic Youth and Mississippi John Hurt. He cut this 16-track set of acoustic folk and country-blues for the label K just before his 1994 breakthrough, *Mellow Gold*, and its crudely recorded ballads and occasional bursts of gnarly distortion are clear precursors to the beats-based folk-hop of "Loser." Two of its songs remain early Beck classics: the self-deprecating "Asshole" and the haunting "Hollow Log." This expanded reissue features 16 additional tracks: outtakes like the a cappella ballad "Sweet Satan" and an early recording of *Sea Change*'s "It's All in Your Mind." MARK KEMP

**Key Tracks:** "Asshole," "He's a Mighty Good Leader"

## Cam'ron

★★★★½

Crime Pays Diplomats/Asylum

**Still one of hip-hop's most compelling eccentrics**



CAM'RON MAY never match his wacked-out 2004 masterpiece, *Purple Haze*. His feuds with Jay-Z, 50 Cent and former Dipset comrades Juelz Santana and Jim Jones have failed to make him a star. But on his sixth album, the Harlem MC remains one of hip-hop's most compelling eccentrics, enlivening clichéd gangsta subject matter and pro forma beats with his deceptively virtuosic flow, and with taunts that work by wiggy word association ("I got the answer/They clueless/Ashanti/Foolish"). Tucked in amid the daffy fun is the first great song of the economic downturn, "I Hate My Job," in which Cam'ron channels the downsized Dillberts of the world. J.R.

**Key Tracks:** "Cooking Up," "Who," "I Hate My Job"

## Cage the Elephant

★★★★★

Cage the Elephant *Jive*

**Kentucky guitar boys channel the blues; Brits dig it**



MATT AND BRAD Shultz, the brothers behind this Kentucky-bred garage-punk quintet, grew up in cramped confines with a pious dad who didn't like secular music – a good recipe for acting out later. Despite callow lyrics and what sounds like an unfortunate Nineties rock-rap influence – "In One Ear" sports G. Love and Special Sauce-style rhyming – Cage the Elephant make a fine mess on their debut: Singer Matt Shultz, a vocal dead ringer for the Arctic Monkeys' Alex Turner, conjures white-blues forebears and barks with abandon on songs like "Free Love," a skronk-y cut about a lady who "like(s) it rough" that rocks so enthusiastically you wonder if the band thinks it's breaking new ground. CHRISTIAN HOARD

**Key Tracks:** "Free Love," "Judas"

## White Rabbits

★★★★½

It's Frightening TBD

**Brooklyn indie rockers join the rhythm nation**



THE COVER OF *It's Frightening* depicts the violent collision of a drummer and a pianist – an apt portrayal of White Rabbits' clacking rhythm rock. Like TV on the Radio, this Brooklyn-via-Missouri six-piece put the beat first, launching their second album with "Percussion Gun," which vibrates like a tribal drum line. Britt Daniel produced the record, and as on Spoon tunes, pounding piano leads the way on the Radiohead-esque "Midnight and I" and "Lionesse." The only instruments that aren't slaves to the beat are Gregory Roberts and Stephen Patterson's vocals, which mingle into perfectly messy harmonies. CARYN GANZ

**Key Tracks:** "Rudie Fails," "Percussion Gun"



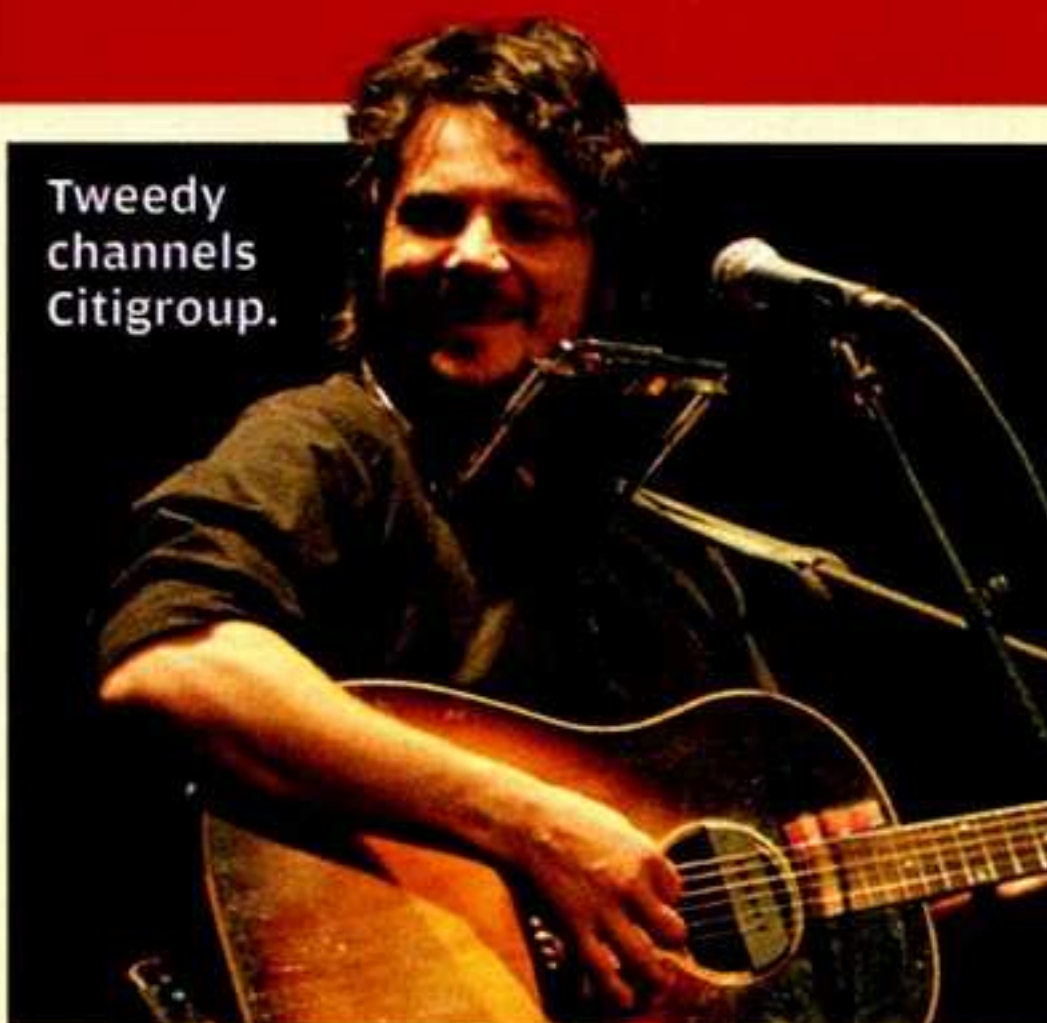
## TOP SINGLES

**Wilco** ★★★½  
"The Jolly Banker"

wilcoworld.net

Wilco deliver this cheeky Woody Guthrie cover just in time for the latest bailout: In contrast to Guthrie's deadpan original on the *Library of Congress Recordings*, Jeff Tweedy sounds near-jolly delivering lines like "I check up your shortage and bring down your mortgage," while Nels Cline delivers a sweet lap-steel solo and Feist supplies garden-tool percussion. Wilco are veteran Guthrie fans (see their two-volume reclamation project with Billy Bragg, *Mermaid Avenue*), and the song is a fundraiser for the Woody Guthrie Foundation and Archives - although you're off the hook for the two-buck donation if you're unemployed. **WILL HERMES**

Tweedy channels Citigroup.

**Beastie Boys** ★★★  
"Lee Majors Come Again"

Leaked

This raging new jam from the vinyl version of the *Check Your Head* reissue finds the Beasties mixing their hardcore and hip-hop sides, rhyming over a punk song that sounds like it could have been recorded on a 4-track. It all feels like it's supposed to be no big deal, but any fan will enjoy the guys' aggro rhymes about grandpas, 1987 and *The Six Million Dollar Man*.

CHRISTIAN HOARD

**Basement Jaxx** ★★★★★  
"Raindrops"

myspace.com/basementjaxx

This roller-coaster comeback from the U.K. duo sounds like the guy from Sigur Rós in a Bollywood disco scene, until the chorus explodes in your face. Then they take it to the bridge and get all prog-rock - just 'cause they can.

W.H.

**Jamie Foxx feat. T-Pain** ★★★★★  
"Blame It"

Leaked

The Patrón made him do it! A supercatchy ode to bawdy nightclub behavior, Auto-Tuned within an inch of its life, of course. Highlight: When Foxx says he's "feeling on your butt - what?"

NICOLE FREHSÉE

**Dinosaur Jr.** ★★★  
"I Want You to Know"

myspace.com/dinosaurjr

Dinosaur frontman J Mascis proves he's still one of indie rock's greatest guitarists as he lays down giant, fat-bottomed riffs over a searing, treble-heavy solo. Mascis still garbles slacker-hero lyrics like "I left you there/I hid upstairs" as if he's chewing on rocks, but who cares? **KEVIN O'DONNELL**

**Mayer Hawthorne** ★★★½  
"Just Ain't Gonna Work Out"

myspace.com/mayerhawthorne

L.A. soul singer Hawthorne sounds like he's been listening to some Delfonics on this sensitive-guy breakup anthem, which is set to a throwback hip-hop drum loop. But unlike all those Amy Winehouse knockoffs, Hawthorne wears his influences on his sleeve, without impersonating them.

P.V. STUMP

**Dizzee Rascal and Armand Van Helden** ★★★★★  
"Bonkers"

Leaked

Grime king Diz and beat boss Van Helden combine maximum rave blasts and seditious noise terror into foot-tapping pop perfection. A manic front-runner for banger of the summer.

PETER RELIC

**Amanda Blank** ★★★½  
"Might Like You Better"

rerdibl.com

Blank is a Philly MC rocking the white-girl, mall-rat, press-on-nail Eighties style - she says her fashion icon is Kelly Bundy, and hearing is believing with this low-tech, stripped-down sex rant. She spices up the classic Romeo Void hook from "Never Say Never" - "I might like you better if we slept together" - with boombox beats and Stacey Q-style electro stutters.

ROB SHEFFIELD

**Incubus** ★★  
"Black Heart Inertia"

All major services

This poppy new track sounds phoned-in: The riffs are slack and limp, the drums lack propulsion. And Brandon Boyd crooning lyrics like "You're a bonfire/And I'm gathered 'round you" will just leave you cold.

K.O.

**Street Sweeper Social Club** ★★★★★  
"100 Little Curses"

myspace.com/streetsweepersocialclub

Tom Morello and rapper Boots Riley mix up Rage-y riffs and a martial beat as Riley hopes the rich "vomit on [their] Dolce & Gabbana." Nice sentiment, but both guys are capable of more.

C.H.

**Deer Tick** ★★★½  
"Easy"

myspace.com/deertick

John Joseph McCauley III is indie rock's most promising urban cowboy. This twanging stomper begins with a storm of feedback, then McCauley snarls, "That son of a bitch crossed me once, but he won't cross me twice." I'll bet not.

W.H.

**Sonic Youth** ★★★½  
"Sacred Trickster"

Leaked

In just two minutes, the Youth build up an impressive head of steam with this taster from their new album, *The Eternal*. It goes for a high-speed Daydream Nation-style guitar glide while Kim Gordon chants psychedelic jump-rope rhymes about "levitating on the ground." Nothing too weighty - just a reminder of how easily Sonic Youth knock off the sounds that other bands struggle for.

R.S.

**Rick Ross feat. The-Dream** ★★★★★  
"All I Really Want"

All major services

A thug-love fantasia: Boss crushes out on a girl who can roll with his hustle ("She graduated from the school of arts/Now she swimming in a pool of sharks"), while The-Dream pitches falsetto woo over a sexy sitar sample.

JON DOLAN

**Steve Earle**

★★★★½

Townes *New West*

Country-rock veteran covers his outlaw mentor



IS ANYONE MORE entitled to make a Townes Van Zandt covers album than Steve

Earle, who named a son after the Texas singer-songwriter? As Van Zandt's protégé, Earle knows these songs intimately - some of the greatest in the folk-country canon - and delivers them with the ease of breathing, mostly unadorned. His voice lacks Van Zandt's sweet frailty, but it brings gruff tenderness to classics like "To Live Is to Fly." Two songs break form: the apocalyptic "Lungs," which adds dusty break beats and noise guitar, and "Mr. Mudd and Mr. Gold," a duet with son Justin Townes Earle - the sound of a torch being passed again.

W.H.

Key Tracks: "To Live Is to Fly," "Pancho and Lefty"

**Phoenix** ★★★★★

Wolfgang Amadeus

Phoenix *Loyaute/Glassnote*

Strokes-y pop rock is alive and well and living in Paris



IF YOU LISTEN to only one song this year about the inner turmoil of 19th-century

classical composer Franz Liszt, make it Phoenix's "Lisztomania." These diabolically crafty French rockers use the composer (a major teen idol in his day) as a symbol of creative conflict, with singer Thomas Mars emoting over an exuberant rush of guitar pop. But the band sounds more musically confident than ever, building on the breakthrough of its 2006 album, *It's Never Been Like That*. The 10 songs are sleek and clean, as if the Strokes had kept pushing a little longer and maybe bought some old disco records. Case in point: "Fences" spikes the electro beat of Daft Punk with an urgent acoustic-guitar breakdown for splendidly danceable melancholy.

R.S.

Key Tracks: "1901," "Lisztomania," "Fences"



## Mika Miko ★★★

We Be Xuxa

Post Present Medium

**Raucous L.A. art rockers mix sex, jazz, punk**



THESE HELL-raising SoCal punk gals hail from the Smell, the grimy L.A. art space that gave us like-minded young bands such as No Age. Their live shows are always explosive fun, but for the first time, the ladies (and their new dude drummer) capture their rowdy energy in a studio. In blasts like "Wild Bore," they mix up giddy chants, incomprehensible screams and twisted guitar over the sort of surging bass lines that make you want to smash into the nearest wall. They pay their respects to L.A. punk history by covering the Urinals' "Sex" – but they top it with their own "Sex Jazz," which has nothing to do with jazz at all.

R.S.

**Key Tracks:** "I Got a Lot (New New New)," "Wild Bore"

## Grizzly Bear

★★★★½

Veckatimest Warp

**Often gorgeous spacey folk, straight outta Brooklyn**



ALREADY A front-runner for 2009's most gushed-over art-rock record, the third disc from this Brooklyn quartet has a sound that is completely its own: an opulent, intimate rumble built on churning acoustic riffs, haunted croons and precise string parts. Tracks like "All We Ask" and "Fine for Now," where singer Daniel Rossen murmurs "We're all faltering" over a languid, jazzy shuffle, are daydreams tinged with disquiet. Then there's the focused stand-out "Two Weeks," an uptempo tune built on gorgeous choral harmonies that sounds like a teenage symphony to God, as conceived by Radiohead-loving postgrads.

C.H.

**Key Tracks:** "All We Ask," "Fine for Now," "About Face"

## Ciara ★★½

Fantasy Ride LaFace/Zomba

**R&B-pop diva needs to find some new steps**



AFTER HITTING big with "Goodies" in 2004, Ciara hit a fallow stretch in which she seemed to be spending most of her time feuding with a hip-hop magazine (her claim: they airbrushed her clothes off) and gossip sites. Nothing says spin control like a hit duet with Justin Timberlake (the slinky "Love Sex Magic"); "Turntables," a curry-flavored but otherwise similarly catchy Chris Brown guest spot, serves the same purpose. But with Rihanna and Lady Gaga now pulling off superior R&B-techno fusions, Ciara sounds a bit incidental on her third disc's dance jams. She fares even worse whenever the tempo drops, thanks to meek vocals and a stale sensibility.

BARRY WALTERS

**Key Tracks:** "Love Sex Magic," "High Price," "Turntables"

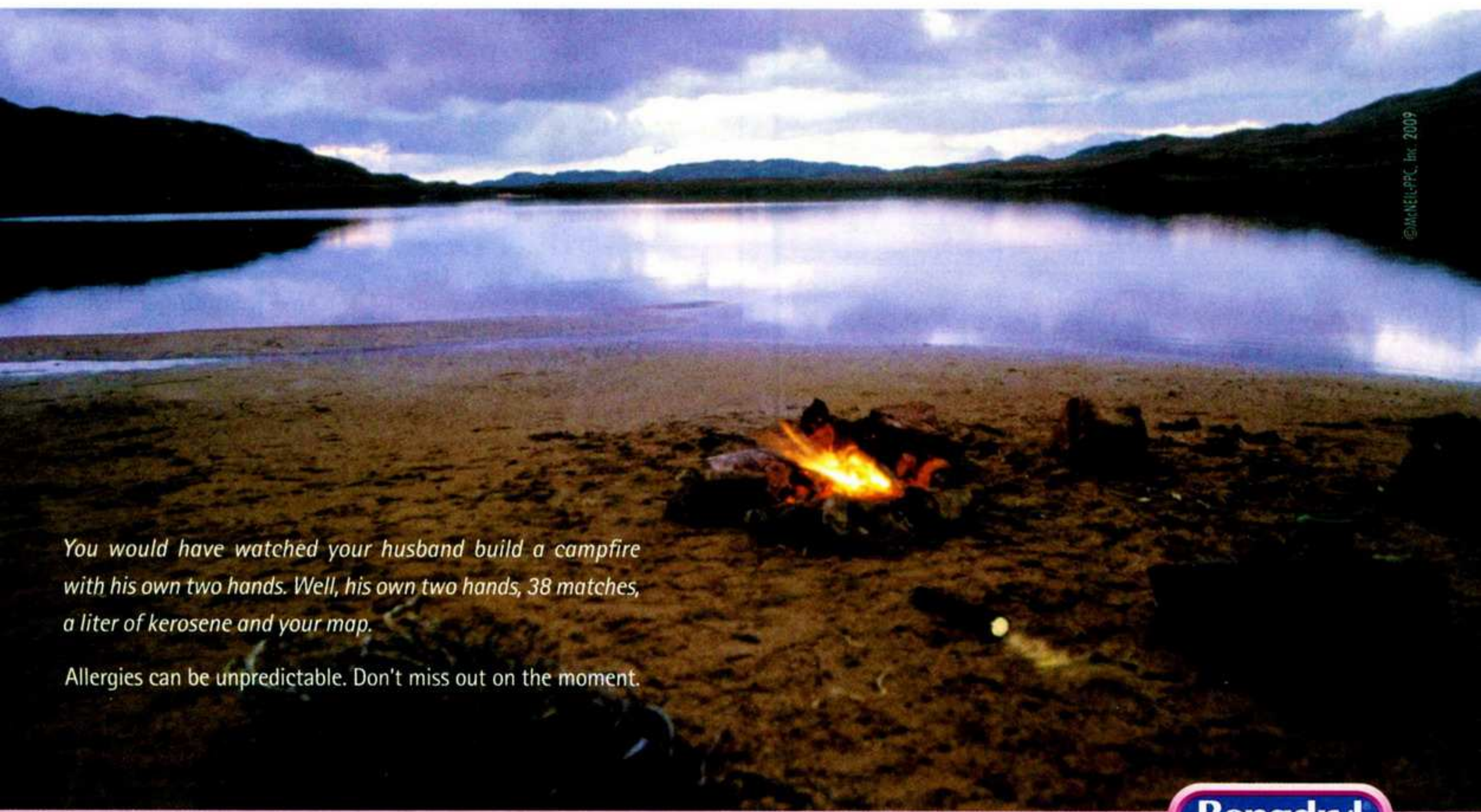
## BOOTLEG

### Bruce Springsteen

Various dates, 2009 tour

"The band does not know this song," Bruce Springsteen says before breaking into a sloppy cover of "I'm Bad, I'm Nationwide," by ZZ Top. "I think I used to play it in bars." Every night on Springsteen's current tour, the E Streeters have been playing the game "Stump the Band": Midway through the show, fans hold up signs requesting songs, and the band attempts to play them – generally, with a surprisingly high degree of success. Barroom classics like "Hang on Sloopy," "96 Tears" and "Wild Thing" have proved to be no problem, while soul classics like "Seventh Son" and "Expressway to Your Heart" sound suspiciously well-rehearsed. Best of all are the punk numbers, like a ragtag "I Wanna Be Sedated" and "London Calling" – which featured Bruce and E Street guitarist/garage-band aficionado Steve Van Zandt trading licks and verses as if it had been part of the set list since *The River*.

ANDY GREENE



*You would have watched your husband build a campfire with his own two hands. Well, his own two hands, 38 matches, a liter of kerosene and your map.*

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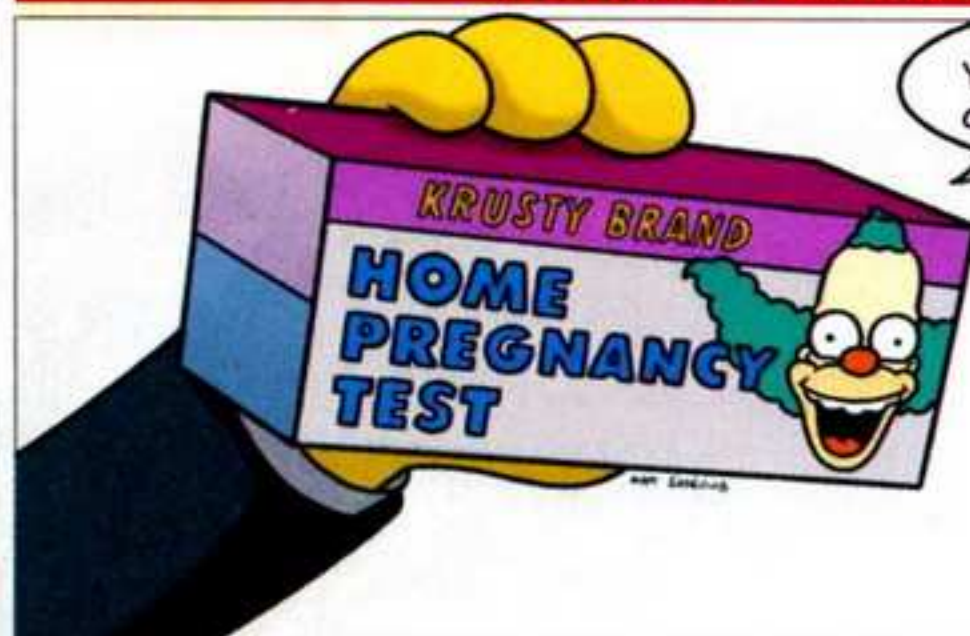
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## REVIEWS NEW MUSIC

### Black Moth Super Rainbow

★★★★

Eating Us *Graveface*

**Zero-gravity space rock  
with a Flaming Lips bent**



THIS PITTS-  
burgh group's  
cryptic 2007  
*Dandelion Gum*  
raised a question:

Why is its leader named Tobacco and not Cannabis? *Gum* was some seriously stoned-sounding business, analog-synth clouds billowing around barely intelligible vocodered vocals. The like-minded follow-up enlists Flaming Lips producer Dave Fridmann, who highlights the tingly interplay between acoustic and electronic instruments and the processed vocals, which generally sound like T-Pain tripping his balls off. The melodies are sweet like cotton candy and dissolve as quickly. But that's fine. You may not want lyrics like "neon lemonade, eat my face away" stuck in your head for too long.

WILL HERMES

**Key Tracks:** "Dark Bubbles," "Iron Lemonade," "The Sticky"

### Tori Amos ★★½

Abnormally Attracted  
to Sin *Universal Republic*

**Singer reassembles herself  
with a plodding set of ballads**



AFTER SPLIT-  
ting into five  
separate person-  
alities for 2007's  
*American Doll*

*Posse*, Tori Amos pulls herself back together again on her latest. The result is a set of prog-inspired balladry with less bounce than her last disc. The plodding "Strong Black Vine" has Amos saving folks from "that evil faith" over strings straight out of Zeppelin's "Kashmir," and "Police Me" is a multitruacked mess of percussion, orchestration and New Wave synth lines. Among the standouts: the ballad "Maybe California," a tender show of empathy for a mother about to throw herself off a cliff.

MARK KEMP

**Key Tracks:** "Welcome to England," "Maybe California"

### A Camp

★★★★½

Colonia *Nettwerk*

**Cardigans singer drops  
disc of sad, elegant pop**



FOR A PEOPLE  
blessed with  
such excellent  
bone structure,  
Swedes sure can  
get down in the mouth. Nina Persson, of Swedish alt-pop veterans the Cardigans, always finds the melancholy in her band's shimmering tunes. With this side project – which includes her husband, Nathan Larson of Washington, D.C., art rockers Shudder to Think – she luxuriates in brooding isolation, orchestral drift and heartsick melodies that recall Sixties girl groups and the Carpenters. "I Signed the Line" is a lush divorcee's lament, and "It's Not Easy to Be Human" could be a murder fantasy or a suicide note. Persson sounds cute and tender, even while comparing love to a shotgun, shining some mid-night sun on these dark, alluring songs.

JON DOLAN

**Key Tracks:** "I Signed the Line"  
"Stronger Than Jesus"

### Pete Seeger

★★★★½

REISSUE

American Favorite Ballads  
*Smithsonian Folkways*

**Songs that inspired  
generations of folkies**



IF HARRY  
Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music* was the folk revival's bible, these recordings – 139 songs from the Fifties and early Sixties – read like its dictionary, from the obscure (the amusing "My Sweetheart Is a Mule in the Mines") to the familiar ("Black Girl," covered by Nirvana as "Where Did You Sleep Last Night?") to the ingrained ("Oh, Susanna"). Seeger, who turned 90 this year, invests each tune with his cheeky spirit. Many have personalized this stuff, Bruce Springsteen most recently. But Seeger steps aside and lets the songs shine.

W.H.

**Key Tracks:** "Black Girl," "Barbara Allen," "America the Beautiful"



## FRICKE'S PICKS

By David Fricke

### Sunday Night Funk

It was not their usual gig: outside under a lunchtime sun. But organist **Joe Krown**, singer-guitarist **Walter "Wolfman" Washington** and drummer **Russell Batiste Jr.** came to the 2009 New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival with all of the chunky funk they put down indoors every Sunday at the city's Maple Leaf Bar. Washington, who played with local R&B gods Lee Dorsey and Johnny Adams, was a springy showman (picking the guitar with his teeth) and sang Jimmy Hughes' "Steal Away" and Lightnin' Hopkins' "Feel So Bad" in a salty growl. Batiste, from the Funky Meters, was a steady engine, and Krown blended the rippling sustain of Jimmy Smith with the syncopated kicks in classic New Orleans piano. (Krown is a killer on that instrument too.) They closed with the comic grind of Johnny "Guitar" Watson's "You Can Stay But the Noise Got to Go." Like most of their fest set list, it is on the trio's album, *Life at the Maple Leaf* (JK) – which will keep you satisfied until you get to the club some Sunday yourself.

### Astral Traveling

Drummer John Vidacovich and bassist James Singleton are Jazz Fest vets. They played at the first one in 1970 (with the blind R&B singer Snooks Eaglin) and were back this year in their long-running modern-jazz quartet **Astral Project** with saxophonist Tony Dagradi and guitarist Steve Masakowski. But



FUNK AT THE FEST  
Krown, Washington  
and Batiste (from left)

the hot set I got was at the Louisiana Music Factory (local-music experts and one of our nation's great record stores) to promote a fine new album, *Blue Streak* (Astral Project). It was a special gas to see the group in such tight focus. Vidacovich and Singleton popped and weaved with spidery elasticity and rifle-shot second-line rolls. Dagradi's knotty, charging "Blue Streak" and Masakowski's "North Wind" epitomized the group's unique resolution of earthy and airy – an ECM-style grace with New Orleans humidity that comes with the album too.

### Crescent City Grass

Bluegrass bands are as rare in New Orleans as high ground, so the Jazz Fest debut of the **High Ground Drifters** was an opening-day surprise. The quintet come from the town's Mid-City neighborhood but shuffled covers (Bill Monroe, Django Reinhardt) and originals ("Hellbender," "Jack 'n the Bull") with plenty of Kentucky in the bravado and no slack. Get more of those good times on *The High Ground Drifters*, the group's self-released first album.

### The Field ★★½

Yesterday and Today

Anti-

DJ rides a sleek train  
straight to Snoozeville



ON THE SE-  
quel to his  
critically be-  
loved 2007  
debut, Swed-  
ish producer Axel Willner  
arranges unrecognizable  
samples into elegant dance  
music that's fit to be played  
at a velvet-rope club located  
inside a cloud. Willner's  
skills are apparent on  
"Leave It," where ghostly  
atmospherics combine with  
a cold-steel pulse for a  
groove both hypnotic and  
lighter than air. But after a  
few listens, the charm of  
many of Willner's sound-  
scapes fades: They provide  
a certain Vicodin-buzz  
pleasure – and then they  
don't.

CHRISTIAN HOARD

Key Tracks: "Leave It,"  
"Sequenced"

### Mims ★★

Guilt Capitol/American King

Ringtone rapper gets  
stuck on repeat



MIMS' 2007  
debut single,  
"This Is Why  
I'm Hot," was  
such a per-  
fectly catchy and irresistible  
piece of pop doggerel that  
you wish he'd retired then  
and there, slipping quietly  
into obscurity, the better to  
personify the daffy delights  
of the ringtone-rap era to  
future generations. Unfor-  
tunately, the New York MC  
is determined to achieve  
one-hit-wonder immortal-  
ity the traditional way: by  
releasing a string of forget-  
table follow-ups. Mims has  
good taste in beats. But this  
album seems just... super-  
fluous. As for the single  
"Move (If You Wanna)": not  
"Hot."

JODY ROSEN

Key Tracks: "On & On,"  
"Makin' Money"

### Zee Avi ★★

Zee Avi Brushfire

Songstress suffers from  
an attack of the Feists



OVER THE  
sparse acous-  
tic-guitar  
chords of her  
debut, this  
23-year-old trains her cute,  
cracked voice on a string of  
often disappointing men –  
there's the restless Kierke-  
gaard fan, the perpetually  
late heartbreaker, the one  
who left those telltale hairs  
on his pillow. The Borneo-  
born Avi gives much of the  
album a warm, old-jazz  
feel, but flat lyrics like "I  
shed tears I couldn't dry"  
make several of the songs  
sound like woodshedding  
material. Others – like  
the escapist "Just You and  
Me," which sounds ready  
for a travel ad – are just  
precious.

C.H.

Key Tracks: "Honey Bee,"  
"Poppy"



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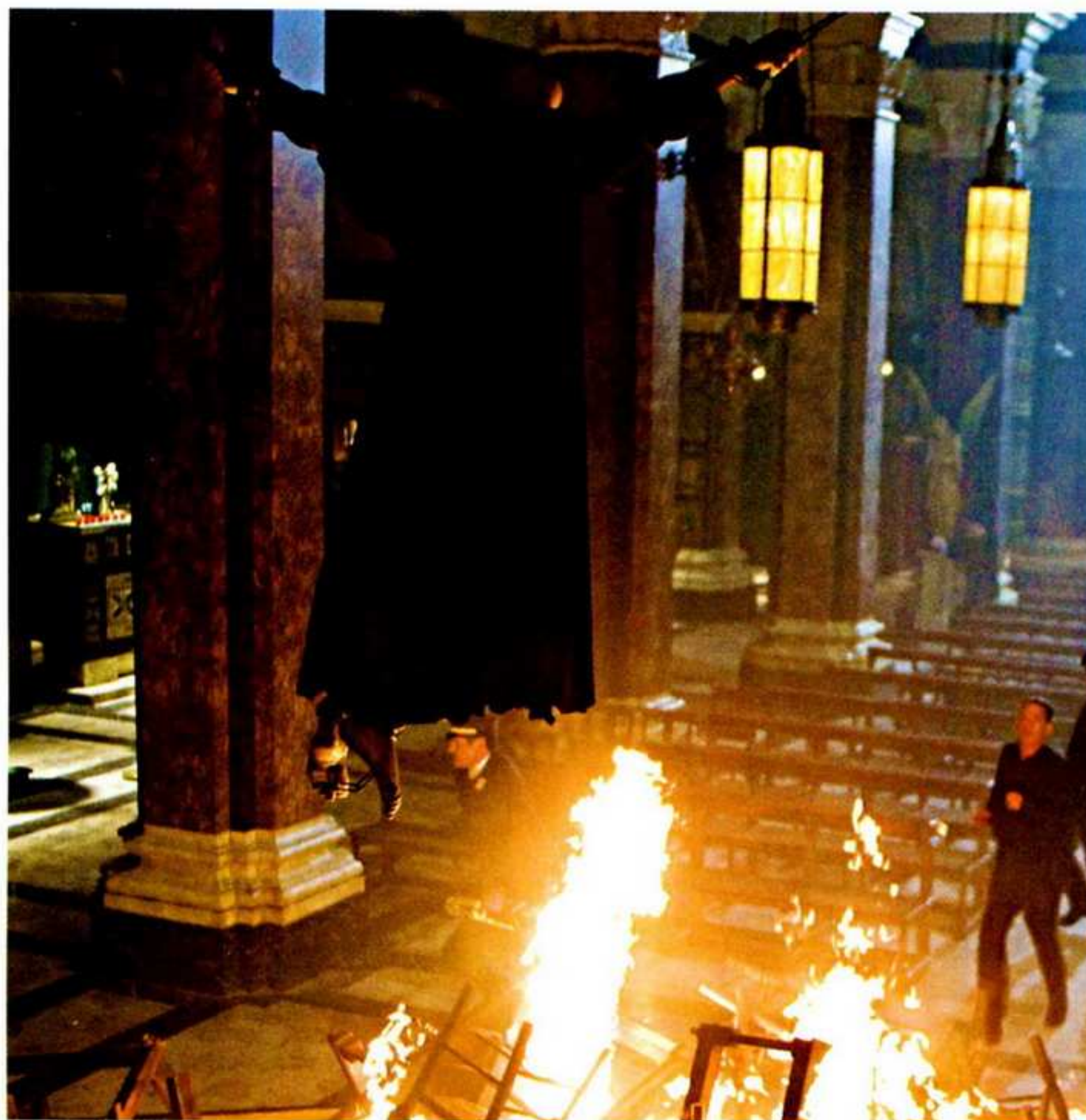


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# Movies

BY PETER TRAVERS



**HELLFIRE** Hanks rushes to save a burning priest as Ewan McGregor (above) ponders the implications.

## Burn, Baby, Burn!

Tom Hanks, in 'Da Vinci' mode, lights a new fire in the war between science and religion

### Angels & Demons ★★½

Tom Hanks, Ayelet Zurer, Ewan McGregor

Directed by Ron Howard

TO SAY THAT THE FILM VERSION of Dan Brown's bestselling *Angels & Demons* is better than the static anti-cinema that was *The Da Vinci Code* is like saying oral surgery is better with Novocain. Director Ron Howard eases off on the pain this time by speeding up the pace, toning down the exposition and lighting a fire under the actors. But the movie is still, in the words that star Tom Hanks applied to 2006's *Da Vinci Code*, "loaded with all sorts of hooey."

Hanks is back as Harvard prof Robert Langdon, but this

time minus the funny haircut. He is again forced to mouth the Brown techno-blather. In Brown-speak, *Angels & Demons* might be described this way: An American symbolist heads to Vatican City to find stolen CERN antimatter, save the preferiti from painful breast branding with the Illuminati ambigram, and help the Swiss Guards and the camerlengo decipher clues to the primordial elements in time to rescue the papal conclave.

Short version: Hanks – looking fit after a few laps in the Harvard pool – is back in Rome on a mission. The pope is dead. Four cardinals in line to succeed are held by a kidnapper who threatens to kill one an hour and sear their flesh with

the symbols for earth, air, fire and water. Is it the Illuminati, a secret sect of scientific free-thinkers long at odds with the church's resistance to science?

Father Patrick McKenna (a live-wire Ewan McGregor) sure thinks so. Patrick is the camerlengo, the acting head of the Vatican until the new pope is elected. He was Italian in the book, changed to Irish here to accommodate the Scottish McGregor. Huh? What? And then there's hottie Italian scientist Vittoria Vetra, played by Israeli actress Ayelet Zurer. Huh? What? The ante is upped when Vittoria reports that an antimatter bomb has been stolen from her murdered father's lab. Unless Robert and Vittoria – no sex, please, there's a plot

afoot – can end-run the Swiss Guard commander (Stellan Skarsgård) and fearless Cardinal Strauss (Armin Mueller-Stahl), Vatican City will blow.

Brown wrote *Angels & Demons* before *The Da Vinci Code*, but Howard and screenwriters Akiva Goldsman and David Koepp have made it a sequel, with the Vatican still steamed by Robert's theory that Jesus was a married family guy. No wonder Catholics howled. The defunct Illuminati is hardly in the hot-button league. *Angels & Demons* drops the book's bizarre paternity issues and avoids heresy that sparks protests. Which is all to the good. Without pretensions to profundity, the movie can be enjoyed for the hell-raising hooey it is.



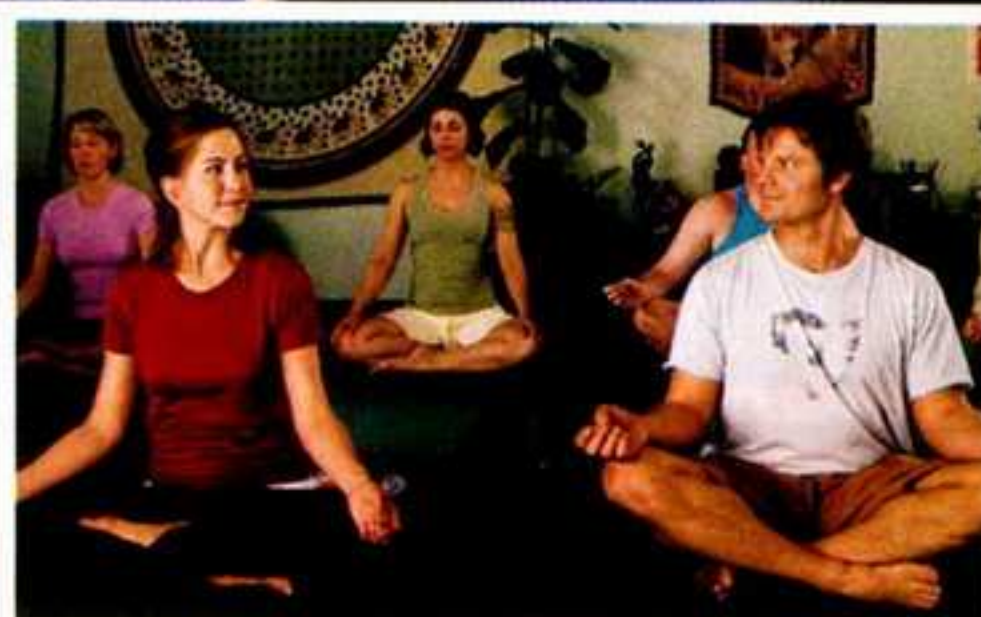
## The Girlfriend Experience ★★★

Sasha Grey, Glenn Kenny

**Directed by Steven Soderbergh**

LOOKING FOR THE DIRTY thrill of ogling a real porn star, Sasha Grey, as she plays a high-priced Manhattan hooker doing a suck-fuck Kama Sutra? Then, dear God, steer clear of *The Girlfriend Experience*. Grey, 21, is there, all right, but director Steven Soderbergh, 46, has no interest in servicing the panting john in us. His movie, stylishly shot on the high-def cheap, runs 77 potentially sexless minutes. Its subject isn't erotica, it's commodities trading. The time is a few days before Obama's election, and Grey's Chelsea shores up her war chest in a free-falling economy by charging \$2,000 an hour for sexual healing. Chelsea's got overhead (accountant, manager, website, clothing line). She might as well be a Hollywood player, which is Soderbergh's point. What do you call trading another *Ocean's* flick to do an art film such as *Che*?

Chelsea defines cool, deflecting a pushy journalist (*New York* magazine writer Mark Jacobson) and blowing off a porn reviewer, played with skeezy relish by legit film critic Glenn Kenny, who offers a money review in exchange for free samples. His revenge review is a hoot. Kenny is a jolt of comic life, much needed in a film that keeps its distance even when Chelsea falls for a client – a no-no in Chelsea World and in her live-in arrangement with her boyfriend (Chris Santos), a personal trainer with his own agenda for whoring upward. The switch from detachment to feeling seems more willed than persuasive in the script by Brian Koppelman and David Levien, who collaborated with Soderbergh on *Ocean's Thirteen*. Emotion doesn't ring true here. *Adult Video News* Award winner Grey sure as hell can't act it, and Oscar winner Soderbergh can't sell it. Twenty years after his debut, Soderbergh is still putting sex and lies on tape. What makes *The Girlfriend Experience* a fresh provocation is not the new ways available to build a fantasy but the near-impossibility of negotiating one you can actually believe in.



**UNEVEN PLAYING FIELDS** Clockwise from top: Porn star Sasha Grey negotiates the paid-escort experience; Jennifer Aniston and Steve Zahn manage love and yoga; Gael García Bernal (left) and Diego Luna play brothers who approach soccer as a blood sport.

## Rudo y Cursi ★★★

★★★★

Gael García Bernal, Diego Luna, Guillermo Francella

**Directed by Carlos Cuarón**

SOCCER PROVIDES THE BACKDROP for this rowdy, ramshackle comedy about two brothers – Gael García Bernal and Diego

Luna, reunited after the terrific *Y Tu Mamá También* – who find themselves (cliché No. 1) opponents on the playing field. Beto (Luna) and Tato (García Bernal) work on a banana plantation in Mexico until sports agent Batuta (Guillermo Francella) provides (cliché No. 2) a chance at the big time. Beto

the goalie is nicknamed Rudo (tough), and Tato, who dreams of a singing career in Texas, is called Cursi (corny), leading to (cliché No. 3) big problems. More conflict is sparked by hookers, gangsters, drugs and (insert your own cliché No. 4). Luna and García Bernal display the kind of chemistry that makes you overlook the clichés in the script by first-time director Carlos Cuarón. Sometimes good-natured fun is enough.

## Under the Radar

### Easy Virtue ★★★

★★★★

Jessica Biel, Ben Barnes

**Directed by Stephan Elliott**

The elegant barbed wit of Noel Coward bubbling up in a time of Wolverine grunts. I must be dreaming. But here it is, a 1920s-era comedy of bad manners done by experts. Jessica Biel is funny and touching as Larita, an

American auto racer catching hell from the snob Brit parents (Colin Firth and Kristin Scott Thomas, both superb) of her new husband (Ben Barnes). Director Stephan Elliott uncorks a rare vintage of laughs tinged with heartache.



**EASY** Jessica Biel

### Outrage ★★★

**Directed by Kirby Dick**

This incendiary documentary "outs" allegedly gay politicians who oppose gay rights in order to keep their sexual identities in the closet. Whatever you think of the pushy methods of

Oscar-nominated filmmaker Kirby Dick (*Twist of Fate*, *Sick*, *This Film Is Not Yet Rated*) to examine the likes of Idaho's

Larry Craig, Florida's Charlie Crist and Dubya's campaign manager Ken Mehlman, you can't deny the grave implications of the blatant hypocrisy on display. This film is a muckraking provocation whose time has come.

## Management ★★

Jennifer Aniston

**Directed by Stephen Belber**

IT TAKES HALF AN HOUR – forever in movie time – for this relationship comedy to get going. But when it does, Jennifer Aniston, as a corporate type who buys ghastly motel art, and Steve Zahn, as the night manager at his parents' Arizona motor inn, do quiet wonders. Smarting from her split from a yogurt tycoon (a splendid Woody Harrelson), she lets the nerd touch her butt. Something happens. I can't describe it. But it's not formula and it's not TV. Playwright Stephen Belber (*Match*), in his directing debut, comes close to the sweet spot. He's not there yet. But he'll be worth watching next time.



# Rolling Stone LIVE

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Peter Bjorn and John

On April 8, *Rolling Stone* brought another exciting Rolling Stone LIVE concert event to the famed Hard Rock Cafe in New York City's Times Square. Jamie Burke's new band, Burke, kicked off the high-energy evening with a performance that included his CK One-inspired single "We Are One." This was followed by the electronically-charged sounds of Peter Bjorn and John. In addition to the performances, 750+ attendees participated in a dynamic CK One *We Are One* lounge and enjoyed signature Jameson cocktails at custom bars throughout the venue. The evening also included special promotions and giveaways from CBS to promote its new show *Harper's Island*.

HARPER'S ISLAND



JAMESON



Hard Rock Cafe, Times Square

Jameson pourings



Attendees at bar



Jamie Burke

CK One We Are One signing wall

## STEVE EARLE

[Cont. from 65] recalls Earle. "I took him there and dropped him off. Wrote 'em a check and dropped him off."

Today, Justin lives in the East Village, a few blocks away from his dad. Thin and covered with tattoos, he looks like a younger, skinnier version of his father. He followed Earle into music, putting out an alt-country album called *Midnight at the Movies* in March. But he's as much influenced by Kurt Cobain as by Van Zandt, coming to traditional music through Nirvana's 1993 version of the Lead Belly classic "In the Pines."

Their relationship remains a work in progress. "Justin called me freaking out the other day because his van broke down," says Earle. "It's a piece-of-shit van I told him not to buy, and I said, 'I told you so.' He hung up on me." Though Earle says his son is "very caught up in his shit right now," Justin has a clear-eyed view of the impact Van Zandt had on their lives. "My dad is a grown man who lived the myth that Townes put across to him," he says. "He damn near destroyed his life and a lot of people around him's lives. And if he didn't destroy them, he wounded them really bad."

In one of Justin's own songs, "Mama's Eyes," he confesses that he "went down the same road as my old man," but "I still see wrong from right/'Cause I've got my mama's eyes." His father, says Justin, "is going to have to suffer my truth. It's my truth, and it's mine to say, and it's how I interpret it, and he's just going to have to live with that." (Justin's eyes, incidentally, are striking for how much they look like Steve Earle's.)

When I ask Earle about his son, he admits, "He's mad at me . . . and he has reason to be. But on the other hand, I'm fully aware there's nothing I can do about it. I can't fix it." While talking about his son, Earle slaps the silver coin down on the table. When I ask to see it, he shows me: a 14-year-anniversary coin from Narcotics Anonymous.

At this point, Steve Earle's big, messy life has become its own self-sustaining and well-

documented mythology. The older, wiser Earle seems reluctant to suffer needlessly, content to enjoy the pleasures of 19th-century Martin guitars and first-edition volumes of *The Lord of the Rings* (a personal obsession – he even listens to *Rings* on audiobook while working out on the elliptical machine). He seems more energized by a play he's written about Pete Seeger than he does by writing new music, but he says he's considering ideas for a concept album based on the secret codes and signs used by hobos during the Great Depression. But Steve Earle isn't going to live like a hobo himself. The standard of self-abnegation Van Zandt created – forgoing family and home and ego for the song – was a younger man's game.

"I hate to say it – this will hurt people's feelings – now I don't have to do that," says Earle. "I think there's a certain amount of muscle memory involved. I think I'm good enough that . . . I don't think you have to be uncomfortable. You don't have to be starving, you don't have to be destitute."

But it was a hard-won realization. Perhaps the most telling moment on *Townes* is when Earle and his son trade lines in a fast-paced, full-throated version of Van Zandt's "Mr. Mudd and Mr. Gold." Earle first played the song in front of Van Zandt in 1972 after Van Zandt heckled Earle from the audience. More than 30 years later, Van Zandt is dead, but his lyrics echo on, the story of a mythic high-stakes card game now charged with the tension of a father and son, both of them haunted by the ghost of a man who gave up everything for a song. **TS**

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# CHARTS

## ITUNES TOP 10 TRACKS

- Black Eyed Peas**  
"Boom Boom Pow" - Will.i.am/Interscope
- Flo Rida**  
"Sugar" - Poe Boy/Atlantic
- 3OH!3**  
"Don't Trust Me" - Photo Finish/Atlantic
- Jamie Foxx**  
"Blame It" - J
- Lady Gaga**  
"Poker Face" - Streamline/KonLive/Cherrytree/Interscope
- Kid Cudi**  
"Day 'N' Nite" - Dream On/G.O.O.D./Universal Motown
- Miley Cyrus**  
"The Climb" - Walt Disney
- Eminem**  
"We Made You" - Aftermath/Interscope
- Beyoncé**  
"Halo" - Music World/Columbia
- Flo Rida**  
"Right Round" - Poe Boy

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## COLLEGE RADIO TOP 10 ALBUMS

- Yeah Yeah Yeahs**  
It's Blitz! - Dress Up/DGC/Interscope
- Metric**  
Fantasies - Self-released
- The Decemberists**  
The Hazards of Love - Capitol
- Peter Bjorn and John**  
Living Thing - Almost Gold/StarTime International
- Bat for Lashes**  
Two Suns - Astralwerks
- The Thermals**  
Now We Can See - Kill Rock Stars
- Camera Obscura**  
My Maudlin Career - 4AD
- PJ Harvey and John Parish**  
A Woman a Man Walked By - Island
- Doves**  
Kingdom of Rust - Heavenly/Astralwerks
- King Khan and the Shrines**  
What Is?! - Vice



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## Chart Flashback

May 23rd, 1964

### TOP 10 SINGLES

- Mary Wells**  
"My Guy" - Motown
- The Beatles**  
"Love Me Do" - Tollie
- Louis Armstrong**  
"Hello, Dolly!" - Kapp
- The Dixie Cups**  
"Chapel of Love" - Red Bird
- The Ray Charles Singers**  
"Love Me With All Your Heart (Cuando Calienta el Sol)" - Command
- The Dave Clark Five**  
"Bits and Pieces" - Epic
- The Reflections**  
"(Just Like) Romeo and Juliet" - Golden World
- The Four Seasons**  
"Ronnie" - Phillips
- Roy Orbison**  
"It's Over" - Monument
- Peter and Gordon**  
"A World Without Love" - Capitol

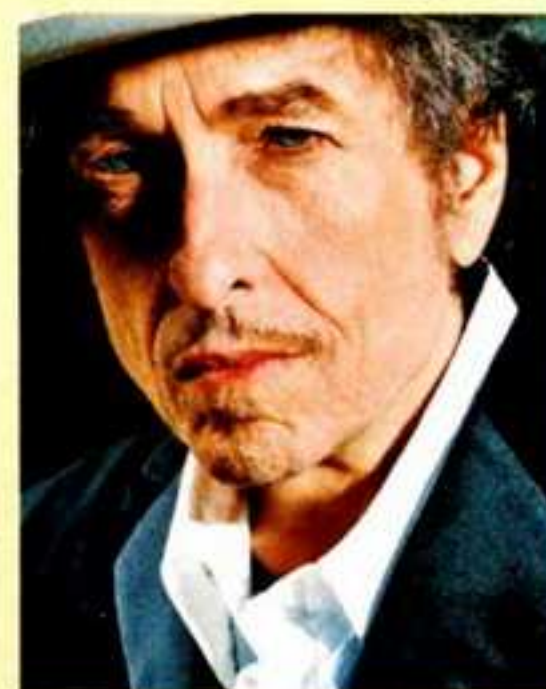
May 26th, 1984

### TOP 10 ALBUMS

- Footloose**  
Soundtrack - Columbia
- Lionel Richie**  
Can't Slow Down - Motown
- Michael Jackson**  
Thriller - Epic
- Huey Lewis and the News**  
Sports - Chrysalis
- Van Halen**  
1984 - Warner Bros.
- Culture Club**  
Colour by Numbers - Epic
- Cyndi Lauper**  
She's So Unusual - Portrait
- Scorpions**  
Love at First Sting - Mercury
- The Cars**  
Heartbeat City - Elektra
- Rush**  
Grace Under Pressure - Mercury

## Top 40 Albums

- NEW** **Bob Dylan**  
Together Through Life - Columbia
- 2** **Hannah Montana: The Movie**  
Soundtrack - Walt Disney
- 4** **Rascal Flatts**  
Unstoppable - Lyric Street
- 1** **Rick Ross**  
Deeper Than Rap - Maybach/Slip-N-Slide/Def Jam
- 7** **Lady Gaga**  
The Fame - Streamline/KonLive/Cherrytree/Interscope
- 6** **Twilight**  
Soundtrack - Summit/Chop Shop/Atlantic
- 9** **NOW 30**  
Various Artists - Universal/EMI/Sony Music/Zomba
- NEW** **Heaven and Hell**  
The Devil You Know - Rhino
- 11** **Taylor Swift**  
Fearless - Big Machine
- NEW** **Playing for Change: Songs Around the World**  
Various Artists - Starcon
- 13** **Nickelback**  
Dark Horse - Roadrunner
- NEW** **Mike Jones**  
The Voice - Ice Age/Swishahouse/Asylum
- 12** **Jason Aldean**  
Wide Open - Broken Bow
- 5** **Asher Roth**  
Asleep in the Bread Aisle - Schoolboy/LOUD/SRC/Universal Motown
- 15** **Kings of Leon**  
Only by the Night - RCA
- 14** **Keri Hilson**  
In a Perfect World - Mosley/Zone 4/Interscope
- 27** **Jamie Foxx**  
Intuition - J
- 3** **Depeche Mode**  
Sounds of the Universe - Mute/Virgin
- 20** **Beyoncé**  
I Am... Sasha Fierce - Music World/Columbia
- 10** **Jadakiss**  
The Last Kiss - Ruff Ryders/D-Block/Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam
- 8** **Day26**  
Forever in a Day - Bad Boy
- 23** **Zac Brown Band**  
The Foundation - Roar/Big Picture/Home Grown/Atlantic
- NEW** **Tech N9NE Collabos**  
Sickology 101 - Strange
- 17** **Keith Urban**  
Defying Gravity - Capitol Nashville
- 21** **Kelly Clarkson**  
All I Ever Wanted - S/19/RCA
- 18** **Diana Krall**  
Quiet Nights - Verve
- 19** **Prince/Bria Valente**  
LOTUS FLOW3R/MPLSOUND/Elixer-NPG
- NEW** **Jason Michael Carroll**  
Growing Up Is Getting Old - Arista Nashville
- 26** **Carrie Underwood**  
Carnival Ride - 19/Arista Nashville
- 24** **The-Dream**  
Love vs. Money - Radio Killa/Def Jam
- 28** **Theory of a Deadman**  
Scars & Souvenirs - 604
- NEW** **Don Omar**  
iDon - Machete
- 25** **Flo Rida**  
R.O.O.T.S. - Poe Boy/Atlantic
- 22** **U2**  
No Line on the Horizon - Island/Interscope
- 36** **Pink**  
Funhouse - LaFace
- NEW** **NOFX**  
Coaster - Fat Wreck Chords
- 31** **Sugarland**  
Love on the Inside - Mercury Nashville
- 35** **Jason Mraz**  
We Sing. We Dance. We Steal Things. - Atlantic
- 34** **Darius Rucker**  
Learn to Live - Capitol Nashville
- NEW** **Halestorm**  
Halestorm - Atlantic



**Still a Rolling Stone**  
Dylan's 33rd studio set sold 124,603 copies in its first week. He beat Neil Diamond to become the oldest artist to ever debut at Number One.



**Holy Sabbath**  
Heaven and Hell - the Ronnie James Dio-led incarnation of Black Sabbath - sold 30,425 copies of their new album in its first week.



**Positive Change**  
Inspired by a viral video hit, this surprise Top 10 charity album captures street musicians around the world covering U2, Sam Cooke and others.



**Reign of Halestorm**  
These Pennsylvania hard-rockers mix Kelly Clarkson-style vocals with metal riffs. Their major-label debut opened with 13,137 in sales.

00 Chart position on May 6th, 2009  
00 Chart position on April 29th, 2009  
**NEW** New Entry **↑** Greatest Gainer  
**2ND** Re-Entry  
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